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Ten Pounds for Adults, Kids Travel Free: An essay on the effects of migration upon the children of the British migrants to Western Australia in the 1960s and 1970s ; and , The red pipe: a novella set in Port Hedland

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An essay on the effects of migration upon the children of the British migrants to Western Australia in the 1960s and 1970s

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Abstract

This study comprises an essay entitled 'Ten Pounds for Adults, Kids Travel Free' and a creative component entitled 'The Red Pipe: a Novella Set in Port Hedland'. The essay focuses upon the children of the 'golden era' of British migration to Australia, between 1961 and 1971, when over 300,000 arrived as part of an unprecedented post-war population drive. Most travelled under an assisted passage scheme in which adults paid £10 towards their fare and their children travelled free of charge. Consequently, these assisted British immigrants were known by Australians as the 'Ten Pound Poms'. Two decades on from the introduction of the scheme, immigration motives had shifted from the desperation born of immediate post-war austerity to the heightened expectations of the increasingly affluent Sixties and Seventies. The vast majority of these later British migrants came in family units, for the future of their children was a major consideration for most of the parents. Many of them faced significant struggle settling in to what was promised to be a 'British way of life', whilst, in reality, Australia was becoming an increasingly multicultural and unfamiliar society.

This study is distinctive in that it examines the long-term consequences of migration upon the lives of the British children. It seeks to acknowledge, but ultimately to shift the focus from, the decisions and achievements of the parents to their children, the 'second generation', who travelled for free. It also considers the ongoing ramifications of the migration decision, as the parents age and pass on and their children, themselves, become parents and grandparents. It does so by utilising the recollections of a focus group of 31 British migrants, who travelled to Australia during this period. Eleven of these participants were parents at the time of migration, whilst the remaining interviewees were aged under eighteen. This thesis has a predominant focus upon Western Australia, for most of the participants originally disembarked in Fremantle. Today, all except two live in this state.

The key child protagonists of the creative component are both British child migrants who immigrated to Western Australia with their families during the late 1960s. The novella, entitled *The Red Pipe*, is loosely based upon the author's childhood experience of Cyclone Joan's visit to Port Hedland in 1975. Joan was the most destructive cyclone to affect the Pilbara district in over thirty years. Over eighty-five per cent of the buildings were damaged and the town was left without power and communications for days. The author spent a harrowing night waiting out the storm with her family, narrowly escaping injury when the cyclone breached the family home. Utilizing the perspectives of two pivotal child protagonists, the novella traces the circumstances, severity and aftermath of Cyclone Joan upon the town and its culturally eclectic inhabitants. This little-known, yet significant incident in the history of Western Australia is set in a geographically significant port town, at a time before the mining boom. The ferocity of nature upon an ancient and isolated landscape provides the catalyst for the resultant exploration of the tenacity of childhood, set against the inherent fragility of the nuclear family unit and interwoven with the transient nature of the migrant condition.

Copyright and access declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

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Signed……

Karen Fouweather

Dated…….

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I also acknowledge the assistance of the library staff at Edith Cowan University, Mount Lawley, and the academic and support staff of the Edith Cowan University Graduate Research School. Research was also assisted by the staff of the National Archives and the Western Australia State Records Office.

Thanks are also due to Fiona Newland, editor of *The Valley Reporter*, for advertising my search for British child migrants of the 1960's. This resulted in many of my participants contacting me.

The completion of this work was greatly assisted by several retreats at The Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers Centre. Thanks are extended to Shey Marque, Christopher Oakeley and committee, members, support staff and volunteers for their assistance and the provision of excellent facilities in which to work.

I dedicate this work to my mother, Glennis Dewsnap, and to my father-in-law, Harry Fouweather, who tragically passed away during the course of this project. I remain grateful that I had the opportunity to interview them and was able to incorporate many of their recollections into this study.

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Above: The author aged almost two, photographed in the arrival lounge at Fremantle, 11 December 1969.

Note on Referencing

This thesis makes use of the responses of 31 participants, 29 of which were obtained by conducting face-to-face oral interviews. Two responded in writing due to distance logistics.

Each participant was provided with a list of interview questions prior to the interview, together with an information letter. In order to gauge the intergenerational aspects of the responses, different questions were provided to parent and child participants. Respondents were given the opportunity to expand upon questions as they wished, or alternatively, to disregard questions they found irrelevant. Copies of each set of interview questions are attached at Appendix 1.

All oral interviews were recorded, then transcribed and the responses collated and analysed for this work. Each respondent signed and dated a consent form after being given the opportunity to ask any questions about the study.

Participants were provided with a copy of their interview transcript and invited to correct or expand upon the information as necessary.

Due to the relatively small scope of my participant group, I did not allocate reference numbers. Instead, I noted the interviewee's name, date of arrival (if known) and date and location of interview. Two of my participants, one parent migrant and one child migrant, elected to remain anonymous and their names have been withheld.

Much of the appeal and interest of the contributions from my participants lies in their often frank and candid responses to the interview questions. I have attempted to incorporate significant pauses and regional accents as appropriate, in order to convey an account that is as authentic and accurate as possible.

Ten Pounds for Adults, Kids Travel Free

Introduction

This study focuses upon the child migrants amongst the British immigrants who came to Australia during the last decade and a half of the 'Ten Pound Pom' phenomenon, when migrant intake numbers peaked and both countries were undergoing unprecedented social and economic change. It adds to the growing repository of historical research into one of the largest planned migrations in the twentieth century, when over one and a half million Britons moved to Australia. They came as part of an unprecedented post-war population drive that lasted over a quarter of a century. Most travelled under an assisted passage scheme that came to be wholly funded by the Australian government, where adults paid only £10 towards their fare and the children travelled free of charge. Consequently, these assisted British immigrants came to be known by Australians as the 'Ten Pound Poms'. Immigration motives had shifted from the desperation born of immediate post-war austerity to the heightened expectations of the increasingly affluent Sixties and Seventies. The vast majority of these later British migrants came in family units, with the future of their children a major consideration for most parents. Recent studies into postwar British migration has addressed the 'invisibility' of these people who formed the largest demographic of Australian immigrants during the postwar period[1]. Many of them faced significant struggle settling in to what was promised to be a 'British way of life', into which authorities assumed they would basically 'disappear'. In reality, Australia was becoming an increasingly multicultural and unfamiliar society. It seemed that any attention that was focused upon the British migrants of this era was in fact negative, with the high numbers of returnees notoriously labelled 'whingeing poms'. This thesis follows scholars, including Nonja Peters[2] and June Caunt,[3] who introduced uniquely West Australian perspectives into this significant field. My study is distinctive because it focuses upon the children, who were cited as a major factor in the family's migration decision.

Between 1961 and 1971, Australia experienced the largest intake of British immigrants in its history: the English-born population rose by 286,000, the Scottish by 27,000 and the Irish and

[1] A. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms: Australia's invisible migrants.* Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2005, p. 9.
[2] Nonja Peters, *Milk and Honey but No Gold: Postwar Migration to Western Australia, 1945-1964*. University of Western Australia Press, 2001, p. 256.
[3] Hilda June Caunt, *From dream to reality: A study of British migration to Western Australian in the 1960's., with special emphasis on those who travelled on the SS' Castel Felice'.* University of Notre Dame, Fremantle: unpublished master's thesis, 2007.

Welsh by 20,000.[4] This was the 'golden era' of British migration to Australia and the emphasis was firmly placed upon families: about 84% of the assisted passage migrants were members of family units.[5] The assisted passage scheme commenced after the war ended during the 1940's, but two decades later, its demographic was changing: this next generation of parents was younger and most did not recall the post-war depression years. The Britain that these Ten Pound Poms of the Sixties and Seventies chose to leave behind was no longer war-ravaged and bleak, but prosperous and modern, with comparable living standards to Australia. Whilst the majority of single British migrants came seeking an extended working holiday and adventure in the sun, most of the parents arrived with higher aspirations for their children than for themselves.[6]

Few of these parents thought to consult their children about a momentous decision that would impact upon the rest of their lives. Undoubtedly, social conventions came into play, for children of this era were still expected to be 'seen and not heard'. Minors until the age of 21 were then legally beholden to their parents and many were traumatised at having to leave close-knit social networks and relationships behind. What, then, were the long-term consequences upon these children of their parents' actions? This study seeks to acknowledge, but ultimately to shift the focus from the decisions and achievements of these parents to their children, the 'second generation' who travelled for free. It will also examine the contemporary ramifications of the original migration journey, as the parents age and pass on and their children become parents and grandparents themselves. Many of the original child migrants who took part in this study have retraced their migration journey as adults, and are passing this family history onto their own children.

The assisted passage scheme for post-war British migrants emigrating to Australian commenced in 1947, although numbers did not peak until the 1960's: in 1968-69 alone, 76,786 Britons arrived in Australia. Of the 925,675 people who emigrated from the United Kingdom and Ireland between 1959 and 1975, about 90% were assisted.[7] This study utilises the recollections of a focus group consisting of 31 British migrants who travelled to Australia during this period, at the height of the Ten Pound Pom Era. Eleven of the participants were parents at the time of migration, whilst the remaining nineteen were under the age of eighteen. The adult migrants were given the opportunity to respond to questions that

[4] James Jupp, 'The Melting Pot: Part 1 of 2'. *The Australian*, 27 July, 2004.
[5] Hammerton and Thomson, p.31.
[6] James Jupp, *Australian Retrospectives: Immigration.* Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1991, p.63.
[7] Hammerton & Thomson, p. 34.

specifically focused upon the impact of the migration decision upon their children, in order to provide an intergenerational aspect. All of them travelled to their new home as part of a nuclear family, except for one, who availed himself of the 'Big Brother' scheme as a seventeen-year-old in search of adventure.

Many of the British child migrants of the 1960's and 1970's are today themselves parents, and a few of my participants are now grandparents. Hammerton and Thomson acknowledge that many migrants who travelled to Australia as children during this period are today interested in their family migration history, in order to 'make sense of their own background and of the historical experience of their parents' migrant decision'.[8] The majority of my respondents expressed delight at the opportunity to recount their early days in Australia, and regarded this project as an opportunity to share their stories with their children and grandchildren. The intergenerational component of this study acknowledges that, over forty years later, the parents are rapidly ageing and, as Caunt notes, there is an increasing urgency to document their experiences before they are no longer with us.[9] Sadly, both my mother and my father-in-law passed away during the three-year compilation of this study. I remain extremely gratified that I had the opportunity to interview them prior to their deaths and record their unique experiences.

Following World War Two, Australia was a vast country in need of development and perceived as vulnerable to foreign aggression. The Australian government consequently embarked upon an unprecedented programme of economic development, centred upon migrant intake. Families were the cornerstone of an assisted passage migration scheme that, between 1947 and 1971, saw almost 2.5 million people from all over Europe 'persuaded, assisted and conveyed to Australia'.[10] Of this diverse range of migrants, 1,150,000 were men, women and children from the British Isles, of whom 86% travelled by sea, and later by aeroplane, under one or another of the Assisted Passage Schemes on offer during this era.[11] Australia's immigration policy was based upon British culture and heritage and therefore British citizens were the most favoured and numerous emigrants.[12] They were nicknamed 'Ten Pound Poms', after the Australian slang name for British citizens, although this term is

[8] Hammerton and Thomson, p. 12.
[9] Caunt, p.5.
[10] Eric Richards, *Destination Australia: Migration to Australia since1901.* University of NSW Press, 2008, p. 204.
[11] Alan Richardson, *British Immigrants and Australia: A Psycho-social inquiry.* Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974, p.2.
[12] Reg Appleyard, *The Ten Pound Immigrants,* Boxtree Limited, London, 1988, p. 1.

misleading—a 'Pom' refers exclusively to English people, as the Irish, Scottish and Welsh migrants are quick to point out.[13] Collectively, these British migrants have contributed to what Richards terms 'an indelible genetic mark on the modern Australian population'.[14]

My interest in the 'second generation' of British migrants from this era stems from my own background. I migrated to Australia in 1969, the peak year of the Ten Pound Pom era, when almost 80,000 Britons arrived. I came with my statistically average family of married parents and two siblings. At not quite two years old, I have no memory of either Britain or of my early days in Australia. Like many child migrants, I have retrospectively sought to fill in these 'gaps' about my birth country and migration experience as an adult. My own experience of an extended family was tenuously honed by way of blue aerogramme letters, dutifully sent 'home' to relatives whom I could not remember, and bi-annual visits from my maternal Nana. I grew up lacking any tangible sense of connection with either my birth country or my English extended family. I was invariably perplexed at ongoing references to my 'Pommy' status, a phrase I was unable fully to comprehend as a child. This resultant sense of confusion and ambivalence, over what Hammerton and Thomson call 'the double identity of the migrant child',[15] was also evident in many of the child migrants I interviewed. The restlessness with which I have imbibed the child protagonist of my creative project is seeded in this aspect of her life, a condition which, I believe, warrants closer examination.

Caunt notes that, whilst Australian immigration studies have been extensive, there has been 'surprisingly little attention paid' to the large numbers of British migrants arriving on Australia during the 1960's and into the 1970's.[16] Recent studies about the post-war British emigrants have sought to redress the imbalance of British representation, commensurate with its historical importance, amongst the extensive studies of Australian immigration. Thomson proposed that the post-war British settlers were 'invisible migrants,'[17] as it was assumed that they would seamlessly blend into an Anglo-Celtic nation continuing to pursue an increasingly untenable White Australia policy. In 1953, W.D. Borrie, who was an adviser to the Australian Government on population and immigration policies, articulated this longstanding assumption:

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[13] Hammerton and Thomson, p. 9.
[14] Eric Richards, 'Migrations: The Career of British White Australia', cited in Schreuder & Ward (eds.), *Australia's Empire,* Oxford University Press, London, 2008, p.164.
[15] Hammerton and Thomson, pp's.31, 161.
[16] Caunt, p. 4
[17] Alistair Thomson, 'I live on my memories: British return migrants and the possessions of the past.' *The Journal of the Oral History Society,* Vol 31, no 2, Autumn 2003, p.57.

> We need not worry overmuch about the British immigrants. They might not be quite like Australians…and none of them are 'dinkum Aussies' when they first reach our shores. But there is sufficient similarity amongst them all in regard to language, religion and political and social institutions for English, Scots and Australians, and even Irish, to be able to intermingle without too much friction.[18]

Patrick McGlone was seventeen when he migrated as a 'Little Brother' in 1960, in search of opportunity and adventure. He experienced this sense of cultural dislocation first-hand, particularly in his early attempts to socialise with fellow young Australians:

> The British were expected to just fit in—it was assumed. So there were no British clubs, or social venues. You're as good as Australian, being English—right? You speak the same language, you do all the same things, you look the same…a bit paler maybe, but as good as…!
>
> I don't even think that the accent (the obvious one) was the hardest obstacle to overcome…it was the lack of a shared history: going to school, knowing the same people growing up…or the same *kind* of people [in terms of] interests, outlooks.[19]

My thesis in many ways follows on from recent studies,[20] which have primarily focused upon the British migrants who arrived and settled in Western Australia during the 1960's, recognising that the isolation of this state produced cultural, political and, indeed, psychological differences to its eastern states counterparts. The majority of my participants originally disembarked in Western Australia and today all but two of them live in this state. This Western Australian basis is differentiated further by the focus upon the child, or 'second generation' of British migrants. With respect to the size limitations of this project, I have intentionally cited some of the more recent studies in this vital field, including the works of Hammerton, Thomson and Lund, as well as contemporary Western Australian researchers, including Peters and Caunt. This has resulted in a relatively compact bibliography that is counterbalanced by the first-hand accounts of the participants.

Thomson notes the importance of life stories to historical understanding. He counters criticism of oral history due to the unreliability of memory and the potential of the historian to shape the answers to their own interests by arguing:

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[18] John Lack and Jacqueline Templeton, *Bold Experiment; a Documentary History of Australian Immigration since 1945*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p.45.
[19] Interview with Patrick McGlone [child migrant], arrived January 1960, interviewed 24 February 2010 at his daughter's Roleystone residence.
[20] Caunt, Peters.

> [That] the so-called unreliability of personal testimony might be a resource as much as a problem. The silences and contradictions in remembering might offer clues about the complex and conflictual nature of past experience; the myths and fabulations of memory could reveal the significance and meaning of these past experiences in the present-day life and identity of the narrator, and the entangled relationship between an individual account and cultural memory.[21]

Indeed, the accounts from my parent migrant participants are doubtless coloured by nostalgia, or faded by the vagaries of time upon memory. Conversely, the clarity of the children's recollections is commensurate with their age when they migrated and are today recalled from an adult perspective. Some of the younger child migrants, to whom I spoke candidly, stated that they had 'second-hand memories' of their country of birth. Their recollections were drawn from the family's archives of black and white photographs, newspaper clippings and souvenirs carefully retained from this pivotal period, together with grainy and silent projector footage and a well-polished store of family anecdotes about these 'early days'. Collectively, these familial historical mementoes today serve as both memory aids for the older generation and educational tools for the younger.

As Hammerton and Thomson note, 'personal testimony enlivens the presentation of history….[The] stories of so-called "ordinary people" make history more engaging and accessible for the general reader'. Whilst official historical sources reveal the policies, formulation and implementation of migration, and statistics provide social and economic patterns, it is oral history and written life stories that demonstrate the effect of these facts and figures, challenging simplistic theories and generalisations and demonstrating 'the human process of migration'.[22] Tempered by an adult perspective and coloured with nostalgia, the value of these early memories was validated by every single one of my interviewees. The recollections of both generations must be regarded with equal measures of relevance, for each contributes a unique generational perspective into the overall migration experience.

My proposed focus upon the British migrant children is timely in consideration of their increasing impact upon Australian society over a significant period of time. Australia's first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, arrived in 1966 at the age of three with her family from the working-class town of Barry, in Wales. In line with some of my participants, Gillard's parents took advantage of the assisted passage scheme after their daughter suffered a health

[21] Alistair Thomson, 'The empire was a bar of soap; life stories and race identity among British emigrants travelling to Australia, 1945-1971'. Cited in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White [eds], *Cultural History in Australia,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2003, p.201.
[22] Hammerton and Thomson, pp's 16, 19.

scare that forced the family to seek a warmer climate. Following Ms Gillard's election, the British press ran the headline, 'Strewth! Australians have just woken up to find a Pommy Shelia is running their country'.[23] The Australian media went so far as to infer that the Prime Minister's British origins influenced her appointment, with *The Australian* proclaiming that 'Julia Gillard has a secret weapon in this election: her fellow Ten Pound Poms whose votes could carry her across the line'. During her election campaign, Ms Gillard proudly proclaimed, "I arrived with my family as Ten Pound Poms'. [24]

The memories of these 31 'second wave' post-war British migrants about an experience that impacted on the rest of their lives provide the foundation of this thesis, with the emphasis firmly placed upon the experiences of the children. Not surprisingly, the migration experience differed greatly between adult and child migrants, as each faced different challenges in adjusting to their new lives. In addition to having to establish themselves within respective spheres of the workforce, the domestic front and school life, they faced personal challenges as they strove to locate themselves in a new society. Whilst a relatively small focus group, their experiences differed greatly; some settled in easily, whilst others retain traumatic recollections of these early years. Many of the parents spoke of missing their homeland, whereas the children's association with 'back home' was often much less distinct. We can begin to comprehend why some amongst the parents' generation resolutely hung onto their 'Britishness', whilst others embraced the Australian way of life (or elements of both) and why some of the children endured a difficult childhood in a strange new country that others happily embraced.

None of my group had been previously interviewed about their Ten Pound Pom experiences. Some of their accounts are humorous and others poignant, yet all serve to enrich our understanding of this pivotal era of Australia's history. The personal histories of these participants are documented here for the first time and recounted in their own words. I have attempted to incorporate significant pauses and regional accents as appropriate, in order to convey an account that is as authentic and accurate as possible. Historical records have been consulted in order to authenticate these recollections and, where necessary, to endeavour to fill in some of the gaps in memory experienced by my participants. However, I found that utilising the interviews conducted with my participants as the primary resource for this study was the most effective means of conveying the essence of this era. The experiences of these

[23] Andrew Tillett, 'Strewth! Poms claim our Sheila.' *The West Australian*, p. 7, 26 June, 2010.
[24] Christian Kerr, 'Demographics: Poms may hold vital numbers: Election 2010. *The Australian*, 30 July, 2010.

31 Ten Pound Poms form the heart of this thesis, adding a unique record of immigration to the growing repository in this field.

Chapter One: An overview

Child migrants: a stipulation

I have thus far referred to my participants who were under the age of 18 when they migrated as 'child migrants'. However, Lund defines the child migrant as 'an unaccompanied child, under the age of fourteen, who has been sent away to live abroad'.[25] All of my younger interviewees, apart from one chaperoned teenager, travelled to Australia during the 1960's and early 1970's within the security of a nuclear family. They are firmly differentiated from the thousands of child and youth migrants, many suffering separation and dislocation from their families, who were essentially deported to Australia from the British Isles under various post-war migration schemes. Most of these children came from families that gave them up to charity, unable adequately to feed and clothe them in a time of post-war austerity. Few of them were actually orphans. These programs were supported by the British and Australian governments, who believed that the children would lead better lives in a clean and outdoor climate and were reassured by the administration of these schemes by churches and various charitable organisations. There is no doubt, however, that the Australian government also regarded child migrants as 'adaptable, cheap labour with long working lives ahead of them', whilst the British government was happy to pass on responsibility for these unfortunate children who had the potential to burden the country.[26]

Some of the more prominent of these schemes included Dr Barnardo's Homes, the Overseas Children's Scheme, and, in Western Australia, the orphanages of the Christian Brothers and the Fairbridge Society Migration Scheme, the latter of which operated in conjunction with existing assisted passage schemes from 1958-69 [27]. Despite its foundations in charitable and sound intent, the history of child migration in Australia has been fraught with controversy and scandal. Whilst many of these child migrants remain thankful for the education, support and fresh start afforded to them by these programmes, others recall suffering 'minimal education, brutal discipline, searing humiliation and even sexual abuse'.[28] The subject of unaccompanied and/or orphaned child and youth migrants during the post-war decades is a contentious aspect of the history of Western Australia but it is not a focus of this study.

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[25] Geoff Lunn, *And the crew went too: The £10 Assisted Passage.* Tempus Publishing, Gloucestershire. 2007, p.130.
[26] Lunn, p.130.
[27] Richards, 2004, p. 269.
[28] Peters, p. 109.

Research methodology

Given the relatively small scope of this study, together with the personal nature of the information sought, the qualitative method was appropriate. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Edith Cowan University on 10 June 2009. Participants were given an Information Letter detailing my project, a copy of which is provided at Appendix II, together with a copy of the proposed interview questions. They were informed that they were free to withdraw their participation in the project at any time. All interviewees were required to sign a Consent Form, authorising the publication of their recollections for the purposes of this study. Participants were given the option of remaining anonymous; two chose to do so. The interview questions, a copy of which is provided at Appendix II, aimed to gather basic personal information about the participants and their migration histories. Recollections of the impact of the migration decision upon their children were also included in the parents' interview questions, in order to obtain an intergenerational account of the children's experiences. Participants were free to divulge as much or as little information as they felt comfortable with, and many expressed surprise at the scope and detail of their recollections.

Whilst earlier researchers in this field have predominantly made use of questionaries and survey instruments to obtain information from participants, in view of the relatively small scope of my study I instead opted to conduct interviews personally, wherever possible. Whilst the interviewing process and resultant transcribing task was time-consuming, I found that I obtained a more productive result. Many of the participants said that they would find it difficult to find the time to complete a questionnaire in detail and probably would not have participated if presented with this format. These reactions are not surprising, given the younger demographic of my focus group; many still have young children or teenagers and juggle the demands of family and work, whilst the earlier generation were predominantly retired and had fewer demands upon their time.

Several of my participants elected to be interviewed jointly with their spouse, or in a few cases, with a sibling or friend who had either accompanied them on their migration journey to Australia or shared this experience as children. Whilst I considered the potential drawbacks of this approach, (that the more outgoing of the two might inadvertently over-ride or suppress the contributions of the other), I found that such concerns were invariably offset by the memory triggers and clarification that these participants were able to provide for each other

during their interviews. In some cases, it was possible to interview both the parents and their children separately from the same family, which was a useful means of comparing the intergenerational perceptions of their migration experience.

Setting age parameters for my then-child migrants proved to be surprisingly arbitrary. Richardson noted the difficulty for social researchers in separating those born and raised in another country to those born overseas and brought to Australia as babies or young children.[29] I settled upon an initial focus group of ten adults and twenty then-children. I had initially set the age parameters at between six to eighteen years old at the time of migration, yet four of my child respondents were aged between only ten months and five years old. I had assumed that recollections from so early in childhood would not produce viable material, yet their memories, whether their own or 'borrowed', were surprisingly detailed and relevant. They had been raised on the family store of migration stories, reinforced by home movie nights, photographs and well-rehearsed anecdotes. Stuart Slack was seven years old when he migrated to Australia and has a rich knowledge of this pivotal event in his family's history. However, he readily acknowledges that 'you don't know which is what you've seen on film from those days and which is the actual event that you remember'.[30] These 'second hand' memories are no less valid or insightful than those of the older child migrants, or for that matter, those of their parents, which may have been coloured by nostalgia or affected by the passage of time.

My final participant tally was eleven adults and twenty child migrants. My contributors were predominantly sourced locally; my Roleystone home has a demographic representation of 21% of residents born in the United Kingdom,[31] compared with the Perth average of 12%. Advertisements placed in the community publication, *The Valley Reporter,* sourced approximately half of my interviewees, with the remainder located via 'word of mouth', through family and friends. My own background proved helpful in identifying with participants and all seemed comfortable talking to me about this pivotal topic. My interviewees were each offered both a voice file copy and a transcript of the interview for their own family records. They were given the opportunity to delete, amend or expand upon any portion of the material. Participants were also given the opportunity to have a voice file

[29] Richardson, 1974, p.8.
[30] Interview with Stuart Slack.
[31] *Domain Suburb Profile*: Roleystone, Western Australia.

copy of their interview offered to the Battye Library for inclusion in their oral history repository, following the acceptance of this thesis.

I made use of the social data of the era, notably the extensive Appleyard survey, which spanned seven years from 1959–67. This major project was launched by the Australian National University and commissioned by the Australian government in response to the high rates of British returnees.[32] Whilst firmly posited within the ingrained cultural beliefs of the era, Appleyard's findings provided a useful framework with which to place my participants' recollections into contemporary context.

The Participants

My group of thirty-one 'Ten Pound Pom' respondents consisted of eleven parents and twenty children at the time of their migration to Australia. All except one migrated during the period 1965-1970, at the height of the Assisted Passage Scheme. All, apart from the eldest boy, travelled as part of a nuclear family, consisting of parents and one or more children. This condition was not a prerequisite of the study, but my respondents are in line with the average family demographic of the assisted passage scheme. The sole participant who did not travel with his family was seventeen years old. He emigrated as part of the 'Big Brother' scheme, a chaperoned free passage programme that aimed to recruit young men.

At the time of migration, the parents participating in my research were aged mostly in their thirties and forties, and the children ranged in age from ten months up to seventeen-years-old. My participants came from many parts of the British Isles, including northern and southern England, Scotland, Wales and the Isle of Wight. All except one travelled under an assisted passage scheme: the participant who did not qualify arrived in 1972, when these programmes were being progressively tightened under the Whitlam government.[33] My participants came from predominantly working-class backgrounds, with only three of the families from a white collar background. The majority of the parents stated that the future of their children was an important factor in their decision to migrate, yet none could recall discussing this with them. Collectively, they represent the 'young to middle-age parents [and their children], who came

[32] Richardson, 1974, p.2.
[33] Interview with Chris Pepper [child migrant], arrived May 1972, interview 16 March 2010 at his Maylands residence.

for the future of their children in a less class-defined society'[34] during the last phase of British mass migration to Australia.

I have endeavoured to let my participants recount their individual experiences in their own words, to convey as authentic an account of the era as possible. Unique familial anecdotes were freely recounted, which encompassed a variety of diverse topics relating to their migration experiences. Similar themes threaded these life stories, some of which appeared to be generationally inclusive. In many cases, the parents were concerned with the search for a better life, fitting in or 'becoming' Australian, and often experienced guilt and homesickness associated with leaving their home country and extended family behind. The younger generation recalled a sense of adventure, excitement and identification with this new landscape and climate, yet many also struggled to fit in amongst their new peers.

Most of my participants have returned to visit the United Kingdom at some point since migration, yet the overwhelming majority have chosen to make Western Australia their home. Whilst the majority of the younger generation proudly asserted their Australian citizenship, many of the parents continued to proclaim their British nationality, or identify with both countries. As earlier scholars have identified, the Ten Pound Pom story is predominantly one of 'successful struggle'. Hammerton and Coleborne note that this theme is entrenched in the Australian psyche, and that 'the battler's tale...is very much a migrant's story, in which the themes of adaptation, strangeness, isolation, family upheaval or disturbance are central to the telling of the story[35]'.

A fairly select group: Who were they?

The Appleyard study indicated that British migrants of this era were a fairly select group, possessing skill and income levels above the British average. They were mostly young families and single persons, almost all of whom were in full employment in Britain. Most lived in the outer suburbs of cities or larger towns, had accumulated modest assets and had not pursued a formal education but were skilled or clerical workers from a working class background.[36] Assisted passages were not means tested, as it was assumed that most could

[34] James Jupp, *The English in Australia* .Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2004, p.109.
[35] James Hammerton & Catharine Coleborne, 'Ten-Pound Poms revisited: Battler's Tales and British Migration to Australia, 1947-1971. *Journal of Australian Studies,* no 68, 2001, p.91.
[36] R.T. Appleyard, *British Emigration to Australia.* The Australian National University, Canberra, 1964, p. 144.

not afford the fare. However, over 25% of the British assisted migrants were also in professional, administrative or clerical jobs, a relatively high representation. This 'wage-earning, moderately educated working-class population' of British migrants did not differ substantially from the average Australian-born, and educational levels were similar to that of the locals.[37] British migrants tended to remain in their class when relocated to Australia, be it professional, skilled worker or labourer. The majority sought to purchase a home, educate and raise their children and live in a class-free society in a warm climate.

My group generally meets these criteria: a breakdown of the parents' occupations whilst living in the United Kingdom reveals that 33% were either labourers or stay-at-home mothers, 38% were skilled blue-collar workers (tradesmen or apprentices), 10% were skilled white-collar workers (office or administrative) and 19% held professional qualifications. These figures remained fairly constant following their move to Australia, although reported difficulties in locating similar employment, or getting British qualifications recognized, resulted in a 14% drop in skilled blue-collar workers, down to 24%, and a commensurate increase in labourers, up 5% to 38%. However, skilled white-collar workers increased over time by 4% to 14%, whilst 5% successfully transcended their working class occupations by obtaining professional qualifications. The majority of my group (89%) were buying their own homes in Britain while 11% rented. Over time, 100% of my respondents attained home ownership or were buying their home in Australia.

[37] Jupp, 2004, p.150.

Chapter Two: historical and cultural background

Britain & Australia during the 1960's and early 1970's

The British postwar migration experience was both shaped and complicated by unprecedented changes to the longstanding relationship between Britain and Australia. Political and economic ties between the two countries were progressively loosened, then severed altogether. The Ten Pound Pom movement was, at its height, set against a backdrop of great flux in both countries. The scheme's core intent, the British peopling of Australia, became increasingly at odds with an emerging multicultural and independent Australia. British migrants were perplexed and confused by the transformation of their new country, which was becoming increasingly different from the 'Britain in the sun' advertised at Australia House.

Considerable economic and cultural changes happened in Britain between the late fifties and the early Seventies, following the post-war economic recovery of Western Europe. Economic prosperity, coupled with new production techniques, brought down the price of consumables whilst increasing disposable income. Women entered the workforce in proportions not seen since the war, as the British economy moved away from heavy industry to new technology. Youth and the working class became visible as never before. Transformations in sexual attitudes and behaviour led to a new 'permissiveness' most visible in youth, fashion and pop culture. The war mindset gave way to a comprehensive social welfare state, built upon the provision of a free health service. Labour scraped into political office in 1964 under Harold Wilson[1] and continued political reorganisation generated by societal pressure, including a raft of key reform Acts.[2] The 1960s saw the onset of cheap package holidays to the Mediterranean, which may well have given working-class Britons the 'travel bug' and laid the foundations for future emigration to Australia. Whilst the British economy lagged behind other developed countries into the early 1970's, including America and Australia, there was no shortage of jobs and living standards had never been so high.

Charlie Fox noted the impact of the Sixties upon Australia, stating that a 'new nationalism replaced the old national cringe…[and] new social movements shifted the boundaries of

[1] Marwick, 1990, p. 111.
[2] Marwick, 1990, p. 153.

politics.[3] Australia's post-war economic policies of 'accelerated expansion, industrialisation and urbanisation', of which immigration was a key component, began under the Chifley government in 1945 and continued into the 'Long Boom' under Menzies until 1974.[4] Australian overseas investment grew from $500 million per annum at the beginning of the 1960's to $1,000 million per annum by 1967–8. Mineral exports had risen to $483 million by 1970. Trading patterns shifted, with Japan, China and the USSR replacing the UK as a main trading partner for key exports, including wool and wheat. Domestically, technological improvements in manufacturing industries saw a population shift to large cities.[5]

By the 1960's, the narrowing of economic differentials between Australia and Britain made comparisons negligible. As Appleyard noted, it became a choice for the prospective assisted British migrant 'between the opportunities available in a country with rapidly developing industry and the security of a homeland which offered a highly developed system of social insurance'.[6] Higher real wages in Australia were effectively offset by resettlement expenses, increased housing costs and fewer social and taxation benefits than in Britain. Many of my participants acknowledged the lifestyle (as opposed to economic) benefits Australia offered. Alan Fouweather readily acknowledged the initial drop in his family's living standards upon immigrating to Australia in 1968, but he never doubted it was worth it:

> We were living in a two-storey house in England, which was all very nice...but it was still very cold there. The climate [in Western Australia] I loved; people were far easier to get along with I think, because you're talking to them in nice weather instead of wading through the snow in England. It's pretty hard to talk when it's blowing a blizzard and you've got a balaclava and fourteen pairs of socks on, just to get to school.[7]

By the 1970's, the rate of economic expansion enjoyed in Australia during the three decades of the post-war boom years declined. Long-term levels of unemployment rose ominously and Australia fell into recession.[8] The 1974 world economic crisis was the worst since the Depression years of the 1930's, with sharp rises in unemployment in western economies commensurate with a downturn in growth. Immigration in Australia was no longer the

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[3] Charlie Fox, 'The times they were a-changing: the sixties was a time of transformation for Australia as a culture of slow-moving, unified, Anglo-centrism became one of diversity and shifting boundaries', *West Australian,* 12 August 2006, p. 62.
[4] Richards, 2008, p.210.
[5] Cohen, B. (1998). *Ideals and Reality: A documented history of Australia since 1900. Book 2, 1945-1990,* p. 65.
[6] Appleyard, 1964, p. 211.
[7] Interview Fouweather, 18 March 2010.
[8] Richards, 2004, p. 272.

'engine of growth' but instead became 'a tool of policy to combat instability.'[9] Cultural and economic comparisons between Britain and Australia were problematic due to the 'unsynchronized pace of change' between the two countries.

What is meant by 'British' anyway?

For many Australians, the terms 'British' and 'English' are broadly, albeit incorrectly, interchangeable. Bueltmann, Gleeson and MacRaild acknowledge that 'English ethnicity is largely perceived as a passive or invisible entity', an ignorance that has been largely perpetuated by historians.[10] In an endeavour to provide some clarification regarding contemporary English identity, Cigler includes the 'British' as being the English, who are the most numerous component, together with smaller ethnic groups including the Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish, Cornish, Channel Islander and Isle of Man settlers, as well as British subjects who are citizens of other Commonwealth countries.[11] My participant group fits into this broad definition: the majority of my interviewees came from England (83%), 7% were from Wales and the Isle of Wight respectively and 3% were of Scottish origin. Of the 'Ten Pound tourists' who availed themselves of the scheme, Jupp notes that, whilst distinct demographics were not published, it is probable that up to 80% were English.

Towards a Multicultural Australia

Until the advent of mass migration in 1945, it was estimated that 90% of the Australian population was British by origin, and traditional imperial ties, together with close trade and economic links to Britain, maintained this status quo.[12] From federation into the decades following World War Two, White Australia was an integral part of Australian values. This policy excluded from citizenship all non-white races, including its indigenous population.[13] Following the defeat of the Labor Government in 1949, the quarter of a century of Liberal power that followed was mostly under the leadership of Robert Menzies, whom Peters

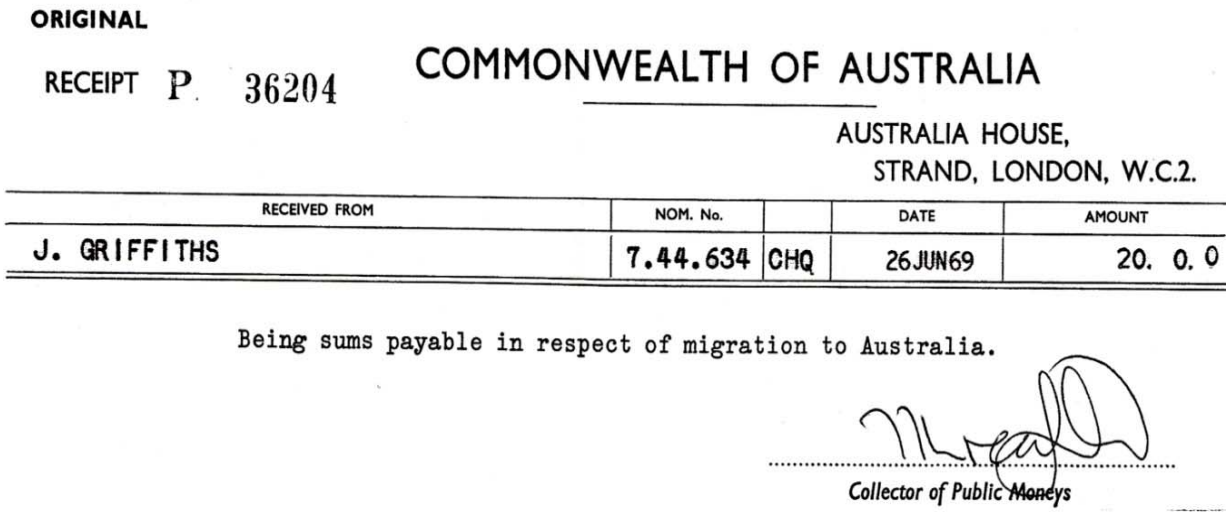
[9] Richards, 2008, p. 251.
[10] Bueltmann, Tanja; Gleeson, David T.; MacRaild, Don (Eds.), *Locating the English Diaspora, 1500-2010* Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2012, p.5.
[11] Beryl and Michael Cigler, *Australia: A land of immigrants.* The Jacaranda Press, Milton, Queensland, 1985, p. 166.
[12] Peters, 2001, p.14.
[13] Joan Beaumont, 'Australian Citizenship and the Two World Wars,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History:* Volume 53, Number 2, 2007, p.172.

describes as 'an incurable Anglophile'.[14] Migration was one of the few political agendas having complete bipartisan support: whilst the prime minister and opposition leader Arthur Calwell shared differing views about the extent of imperial ties, both agreed that Australia was essentially a British country. They were also united in their view that the White Australia policy provided essential protection against the millions of newly independent Asians and the powerful communist influence in China, Vietnam and Indonesia.[15] Jupp notes that concern over racial purity has always been a parallel concern to the need to populate, defend and develop such a vast continent.[16]

By the mid-1960's, Australian policies of assimilation had given way to integration, which expected migrants to become indistinguishable from existing Australians by speaking English, wearing conventional clothing, eating local food and even changing their names. However, by 1964, there were 250,000 Italians, 100,000 Greeks, 50,000 Maltese, 100,000 Dutch and more than 100,000 Germans in Australia. The increasingly visible presence of these 'New Australians', coupled with an increasing ambivalence towards the relevance of the monarchy, reinforced the ongoing debate about a national identity. By the 1970's, the nation was moving from 'a notion of citizenship based on British cultural norms to one based on equal rights'.[17] Jupp suggested a more complicated future for the 'England over the water' promoted in the post-war years, noting that Australia today 'is a multicultural country resting on an English base, part of a global English-speaking society increasingly dominated by the United States, and located in an Asian-Pacific region from which British imperialism has irrevocably withdrawn'.[18]

[14] Peters,2001, p.21.
[15] James Jupp, 'The Melting Pot [essay]- Part 1 of 2'. *The Australian*, 27 July, 2004: *elibrary*
[16] Jupp, 2007, p.11.
[17] Jordens, p. 23.
[18] Jupp, 2004, p. 9.

The Ten Pound Pom Scheme: an overview



ORIGINAL

RECEIPT P. 36204

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA HOUSE,
STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2.

RECEIVED FROM	NOM. No.		DATE	AMOUNT
J. GRIFFITHS	7.44.634	CHQ	26JUN69	20. 0. 0

Being sums payable in respect of migration to Australia.

Collector of Public Moneys

Above: the receipt issued for the Griffiths family's 1969 passage to Australia (courtesy of Sharon and Jeremy Griffiths)

Australian migration policy from World War Two until the early 1970's was squarely focused upon attracting 'a critical mass of people to sustain a standard of living for the entire nation'.[19] It was not, as Richards points out, a humanitarian project, but an economic one that aimed to expand the workforce, protect its borders and consolidate 'European Australia'. Few societies in modern history have ever attempted to accommodate so large a migrant influx in proportion to its own population, and Australia's ability to cope with such change was an ongoing concern. However, despite tensions felt in all sectors of society, the great migration was achieved with a remarkably benign outcome.[20]

The United Kingdom Free and Assisted Passage Scheme was negotiated with the British Government and began on 31 March 1947, when 23,314 British immigrants arrived in Australia. The scheme ran until 1973, with migrant intakes progressively tightened or relaxed by Australian immigration authorities, according to economic demand. Harry and Denice

[19] David Scott, 'Looking at life in a different light: the branding of Australia'. *Australian Screen Education* 36 (2004).
[20] Richards, 2008, pp's. 232, 234.

Fouweather migrated with their four young sons in 1969, the youngest of whom would eventually become my husband. They explained the scheme as follows:

> Denice: It were twenty pounds for the six of us. Children under eighteen were free. But—you couldn't leave the country for two years, once you'd emigrated. Otherwise, you'd to pay back the full fare. It wouldn't have been cheap; all that way back plus the difference in your fares on the way out.
>
> Harry: Aye—ten pounds for adults, kids travel free. Not a bad deal. As long as you could give it all away in England….and then hack it in Australia.[21]

The two year minimum stay in Australia was considered a reasonable period upon which to base a permanent settlement decision, as well as to deter those seeking 'a holiday in the sun on government money'.[22] Upper age limits and a few other aspects changed over the years, but the £10 contribution to the fare required from all adults remained the same for the duration of the scheme.

An extensive promotional campaign of the Ten Pound Pom scheme was undertaken in Britain, including newspaper advertising, posters, pamphlets and film nights, all promoting Australia's healthy outdoor lifestyle. Australia was desperately short of professional and skilled workers who could contribute to the country's industrial growth. Urban families with young children, who could contribute their skills to the nation for generations to come, were squarely targeted. Only migrants nominated by family, friends and employers in Australia were eligible until 1951, when hostel accommodation for Commonwealth-nominated Britons was completed.[23] Provision was also made for single young people, who were assumed to be mobile enough to find their own accommodation, and aged parents of migrants who would initially stay with their family.[24]

Australia's Department of Immigration was established in 1945 to orchestrate the planned mass migration. Despite the enormity of this project, Jordens notes that the department was never large; its staffing complement grew from 512 in 1949-50 to only 795 in 1965, by which time the arrival of over 2.3 million immigrants to Australia had been orchestrated. [25] In order to secure and maintain the co-operation of unions and large employers, two advisory bodies

[21]Interview with Harry and Denice Fouweather [parent migrants], arrived April 1968, interviewed at their Belmont residence on 25 July 2010.
[22] Lunn, p.21.
[23] Ann-Mari Jordens, (1995). *Redefining Australians*; *Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity.* Sydney, Australia: Hale & Iremonger Pty Ltd., p.27.
[24] Appleyard, 1988, p.54.
[25] Jordens, p. 4.

were established: the Immigration Advisory Council in 1947 and the Immigration Planning Council in 1949.[26]

In 1949 Arthur Calwell, as Minister for Immigration in the Chifley government, stated that, for every foreign migrant accepted into Australia, he hoped there would be ten from Britain. It soon became apparent that this was unrealistic, with a revised rate of 50% also proving problematic. Additionally, most British migration came from families who favoured the large cities, which did not meet Australia's requirements for a mobile workforce.[27] Calwell was aware of these factors; even as he announced his 90% target, he was also organising the first major influx of foreign-assisted migrants in Australia's history. In 1947, he signed an agreement between Australia and the International Refugee Organization (IRO) for the despatch of 12,000 Displaced Persons per year. These newcomers met the twin aims of fulfilling Australia's international humanitarian responsibilities, together with providing much-needed workers. As Jupp notes, these early non-British migrants paid dearly for Australia's humanitarianism, for they were required to work at any job, wherever they were sent, regardless of skills or professional qualifications, for a period of two years. They arrived in overcrowded, hastily refitted troopships provided by the IRO, and families were routinely split up on arrival.[28] Whilst the British Isles remained the preferred source of migrants for the next two decades, there was insufficient 'British stock' to meet demand and Australia's immigration programme continued to expand across Europe into the eastern Mediterranean.[29] At the time, it was expected that these 'aliens' would assimilate as 'New Australian' citizens and follow existing cultural norms,[30] an expectation that, not surprisingly, became increasingly untenable.

British immigrant numbers to Australia increased after 1950, when the Australian government ramped up its efforts to maximise intakes with the introduction of the Nominated Scheme for British Migrants. Under the scheme, the requirement for nomination by Australian families or employers was removed, and British families could apply directly to the Australian Government. Successful families were temporarily housed in reception centres or hostels upon arrival. This scheme was so popular that, of the 100,000 British migrants that year, 70,000 were assisted and the government reached its target of a 50% British migrant

[26] Jordens, p. 31.
[27] Jupp, 1991, p.71.
[28] Cigler, p.168.
[29] Richards, 2008, p.213.
[30] Alexander Aleinikoff and Douglas Klusmeyer, *From migrants to citizens; membership in a changing world.* Brookings Institution Press, Washingon, USA, 2000, p. 45.

intake for the first time by the end of 1951. Other campaigns designed to boost British numbers included the ongoing Child Migration Scheme, 'Bring out a Briton' in 1957, which tried to encourage Australian families to sponsor British migrants, and the 'Nest Egg Scheme' in 1959, which required migrants to bring a minimum of £500 with which to buy a house upon arrival.[31] Despite these efforts, alien assisted migrants to Australia continued to exceed British migrants until the 1960's, when the British proportion of Australian emigrants rose to 54%. British migrants were by now more informed, calculating and under less economic pressure than their predecessors. Many took advantage of the £10 fare to 'look Australia over' or simply to avail themselves of an extended working holiday.[32]

The 1960's saw the Australian government step up its efforts to recruit British migrants, as living standards continued to improve in Britain and increased competition was felt from Canada and America. The British were accorded many privileges in Australia that were not awarded to the thousands of migrants also being admitted from Europe. British citizens were entitled to superior passage conditions, qualified for extended hostel accommodation, received preferential treatment when applying for government jobs or the armed forces, could freely visit overseas and could vote in federal elections without becoming Australian citizens. Families were specifically targeted, with no account taken of ability, income or occupation: prospective migrants simply had to pass a medical test and not have a criminal record.[33] Lund notes that an unfortunate side-effect of the ease of the migration process during this heady period was that it had done little to encourage would-be migrants to think through carefully what could well be the biggest decision of their lives. Impulse migration decisions often led to regret, accounting for the associated high returnee rate during this period.[34]

The White Australia Policy was an increasing source of embarrassment to the Australian Government during the 1960's. Based upon assumptions of racial discrimination and exclusion, it attracted increasingly unwelcome comparisons with South Africa's apartheid policies.[35] The offending legislation was progressively modified throughout this decade. It became unworkable altogether as Australia's post-war immigration policies brought about an increasingly multiethnic society, coupled with the effective replacement of Britain with Japan as a major trade partner by the late 1960's. The election of the Australian Labour Party in

[31] Peters, p.18.
[32] Appleyard, 1988, p.39.
[33] Jupp, 1991, p. 62.
[34] Lunn, , pp's. 106. 134
[35] Appleyard, 1988, p.41.

1972, led by Gough Whitlam, saw the beginning of a multicultural policy that would last until 1996. The White Australia Policy was finally removed from both parties' political platforms altogether in 1972.[36] By October 1973, a new Citizenship Act accorded all migrants equal treatment in recognition of citizenship, regardless of ethnicity.[37]

By the early 1970's, as British economic prosperity caught up with, and finally exceeded average living standards enjoyed in Australia, emigration dwindled and eventually reversed.[38] The British remained the largest immigration group to Australia until the early 1970's, then fell away sharply after the abandonment of the Ten Pound scheme in 1972. The world oil crisis of 1973 brought about an extended period of economic recession. Australia's years of high protective tariffs had permitted the growth of too many inefficient industries, and profits began to fall. Both local and overseas investors began to look elsewhere and unemployment grew.[39] Assisted passage schemes were consequently wound down, including those to the British, and by 1983 ceased altogether.[40]

Australia's 'invisible migrants'

It was assumed that, because Australia had been founded upon British cultural and political ideals, the British post-war migrants would assimilate easily and 'disappear' into this new, yet supposedly familiar, society. However, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, it seemed that the British migrants were visible for all the wrong reasons. Their protests about Spartan hostel conditions created a furore in the Australian press and politicians bemoaned the wasted investment as large numbers of these 'whingeing Poms' returned home, to complain to their own press about 'false advertising'.[41] The publicity generated did at least prompt some research to be carried out into the reasons for the return exodus, including Appleyard's long-term study. For the first time, some acknowledgement was given that the British faced similar challenges to other migrants.

Unfortunately, the focus upon British migrants in Australian research and politics was short-lived. As Britain remained unable to provide workers in sufficient numbers, Australia increased its intake of migrants from non-English-speaking countries. The problems faced by the waves of European migrants, together with their social and political impact, outweighed

[36] Aleinikoff & Klusmeyer, 2000, pp's. 39, 50.
[37] Appleyard, 1988, p.42.
[38] Richards, 2004, p. 266.
[39] Cohen, p.82.
[40] Appleyard, 1988, p.43.
[41] Hammerton and Thomson, pp's 9, 10.

the concerns of the British settlers. As Richards points out, the cultural adjustments, language and social barriers faced in the booming and affluent Australia of the 1960's were little more than 'the tailpiece to a much more dramatic story played out in Europe before emigration'.[42] These 'New Australians' necessarily became the focus of Australian political policy, media attention and social research. Over time, the term 'immigrant' came to be associated with settlers originally from non-English-speaking countries. The British were not considered 'true' immigrants in view of Australia's cultural and historical links to Britain. Bueltmann, Gleeson and MacRaild note that:

…while the significance of the English has been noticed by historians of emigration, it is not acknowledged by historians of ethnicity: scholars recognize the English as a key population source in the Anglophone world but say relatively little about their contribution as immigrant communities.[43]

It is hardly surprising, then, that migrant history projects initiated throughout Australia in the 1970s and 1980s by government, community and ethnic interests, with a few notable exceptions, excluded British contributions.[44] Recent studies have sought to redress this imbalance by recording the migration stories of the postwar British migrants, seeking to acknowledge and recover the history of these 'invisible migrants' for future generations, in order to record a more complete picture of Australia's postwar immigration history.

Where did they come from?

The British migrants were overwhelmingly English (84%), with only 3.2% from Wales and 13.7% of Scottish origin.[45] They came mostly from cities and large towns, with few from rural counties, or the coal districts. My participant group broadly fits this distribution, with 83% from England, 7% from Wales and The Isle of Wight respectively and 3% originating from Scotland.

The majority of English emigrants came from the London area in the 1960's as it also had the worst housing shortage, caused by wartime bombing, large-scale slum clearing and responses to inward migration from Commonwealth countries, including the West Indies, India and

[42] Richards, 2008, p.208.
[43] Bueltmann, Gleeson, and MacRaild, 2012, p. 1.
[44] Hammerton and Thomson, , p.11.
[45] Hammerton and Thomson, p.35.

Ireland. The suburban and metropolitan districts of Manchester and Glasgow were also strongly represented. The Northeast was the other dominant supplier of emigrants, with skilled workers from the steel and shipbuilding industries attracted to the rapidly growing metal and motor manufacturing trades in Australia.[46] My English participants are fairly evenly distributed; 18% came from London and surrounding districts, 12% from southern England, 44% from the Midlands and 24% from northern England, predominantly Yorkshire and surrounding counties. Jack Bullimore explained that 'we came from the Isle of Wight, a very small island, and if you wanted your kids to do well, they had to go to England, what we called The Mainland. Otherwise, you'd just stagnate in a little village. So what we did [migrating to Australia] was the same, just on a bigger scale—a bigger island'.[47]

[46] Jupp, 1991, p. 57.
[47] Interview with Jack, Eunice and [son] Mark Bullimore, arrived October, 1969, interviewed at Mark's Roleystone residence on 2 March, 2010.

Chapter Three: the Migration journey

My parents basically gave up everything: Reasons to migrate

A 1966 Social Survey conducted throughout the United Kingdom found that Australia was the preferred migration destination over geographically closer countries, including Canada and South Africa, of 51% of parents with pre-school children, 49% of those with primary school children and 43% of those with children in secondary school.[1] The 'second generation' of Ten Pound Poms during the 1960's and into the 1970's came with an increased sense of opportunity. They planned alternative futures to their parents, with their children firmly in mind. Bert Slack recalled that his children enjoyed a good life in England, where they lived in a small village in Nottinghamshire, on the edge of Sherwood Forest. Yet Bert became restless after his father died. He was keen to see more of the world after travelling overseas during his National Service. Bert says of England, 'you can go three hundred miles and you'll fall into the sea. Here [in Australia], you can go *three thousand miles* before you'll fall in the sea'.[2] My father-in-law, Harry Fouweather, was a Yorkshire coal miner from the age of fourteen and wanted a better life for his four sons. His migration decision was finalised after he narrowly survived a roof collapse during a mining shift. He stated, 'I thought that the children would have a better chance; a better start. It wasn't just for me'.[3]

Other British migrants, notably young singles and married couples without children, saw the compulsory term of two years as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for an extended working holiday. Often their migration decisions were linked to a search for adventure, in line with the changes in youth culture and aspirations that typified the 1960s. Conventional expectations of career, marriage and economic security were set aside as young people utilised the assisted passage scheme to pioneer the working holiday. The two-year term set a timeframe on their sabbatical, which helped to placate parental objections. Whilst many of these 'Ten Pound Trippers' did eventually settle in Australia, most initially had no firm intentions to do so. Whether they stayed or returned to settle permanently in Britain, all were transformed by their Australian experience.[4]

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[1] Richardson, 1974, p.12.
[2] Interview with Bert and Milly Slack [parent migrants], arrived April 1970, interviewed 26 June, 2010 at their Armadale residence.
[3] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather
[4] Hammerton and Thomson, p.75.

In terms of the decision to migrate, Hammerton and Thomson dismiss stereotypical expectations of 'marital dominance and subordination' or conformity to the 'traditional ideals of domestic based upon a conventional male breadwinner and home-based wife and mother'. These generalisations tend to be supported by studies of the period, but are intrinsically simplistic. They do not acknowledge the enormous diversity of migrant stories, or the complex dynamics of family relations.[5] Over half of the parents I interviewed made the emigration decision on a joint basis with their spouse, although none could recall directly involving their children in this process.

Racial tensions were also a source of considerable concern in Britain and a factor in the migration decision of many. Improving economic conditions in Britain after 1960 saw large migrations flowing in from the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean. Many were refugees from political upheaval in Commonwealth countries who, as full British subjects, were entitled to settle in Britain. Prime Minister Wilson was keen to avoid wage rises by importing the additional 200,000 workers needed, but many British were unused to change and viewed foreigners with suspicion. The slogan, 'If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Labour', personified the fears of many about the impact upon the British way of life.[6] One of my participants, Michelle Beor, recalled that her father's decision to migrate was predominantly motivated by Australia's discriminatory immigration policy: 'My Dad wanted to get away from the immigration situation in England…he didn't want his daughter to marry a black man. He liked the White Australia policy—seriously! So he thought that Australia would be a good place to come to'. Michelle added that 'Mum did *not* share my Father's concerns about my marrying a black man. It would not have worried her in the slightest'.[7]

Australia's climate and its associated health benefits were also a popular reason cited. The British winter of 1962-63 was the most brutal in two decades, with the bad weather delaying transport and construction. During the worst month, 878,000 people were out of work.[8] Roger Dallas recalls that the impact of the British climate upon his health was the primary reason for his parents' decision to migrate from Essex:

[5] Hammerton and Thomson, p. 78
[6] Lloyd, 1970, p.398.
[7] Interview with Michelle Beor, arrived January 1966, at her Noranda residence on 15 February, 2010.
[8] Lloyd, 1970, p. 383.

> We had a nice house there that backed onto the local forest and we were two [bus] stops away from the local seaside resort. My father had a really good job with British Rail, he was a design engineer. [But] I was a really bad asthmatic and the cold weather set it off worse. So the specialist said, 'Get over to Australia.' So that's why my parents basically gave up everything and came to Perth.[9]

Jeremy Griffiths and my sister, Gail Kirby, both suffered from severe childhood eczema and it was hoped that the warmer Australian climate would help to alleviate the condition—which it did, for both of them.[10]

Surveys of the period indicated that, whilst the majority of Italian and Greek migrants were motivated by the economic possibilities of Australia's full employment and high wages, the British attached relatively little significance to economic benefits and most did not have entrepreneurial aspirations. These findings are confirmed by this recollection from Roger Dallas:

> Years ago I made friends with an Italian. A lot of the guys [Australian friends], they're all, "It's the wogs this and the wogs that. They shouldn't be here and all that—look at all the money they've got." And I'm saying, "Yes, but they work seven days a week for what they've got; in the road delis and market gardens." There was a lot of…jealousy, I suppose.[11]

Jupp noted that, instead, 'the climate, the spaciousness and the accessibility of the beach and countryside, the friendliness of the people and the way of life were most admired by the British'.[12] Given that the majority of them came from overcrowded urban districts, these preferences are not surprising.

Perhaps the essence of the motivation behind the Ten Pound Pom phenomenon was best explained by Peter Black, a British journalist sent by the *Daily Mail* in 1965 to investigate the progress of British migrants to Australia. He toured Australia conversing with hundreds of his fellow country folk and produced *Poms in the Sun,* an illuminating account of his quest. Black noted that 'the motives for large acts may be quite small', explaining:

> I caught the essential character of this post-war migration from Britain of which the impelling force is a sober appraisal of personal conditions in Britain, tinctured by the pressure of Australia House's artful propaganda. It does not try to sell jobs to the

[9] Interview with Roger Dallas, arrived in 1965, at his Ocean Reef home on 9 April, 2010.
[10] Interviews with Gail Kirby [child migrant: typewritten response], arrived December 1969, dated 3 January 2010 and Jeremy Griffiths [child migrant], arrived 1969, at his Bedfordale residence on 28 June 2010.
[11] Interview Roger Dallas.
[12] Jupp, 1991, p.63.

> British; it sells better opportunities for children, sunshine, and the beaches; and the motives stated by most migrants reflected the success of these appeals.[13]

Whilst none of my parent migrant participants gave their children as the sole reason for migrating, 91% stated that the future of their children was one of the main reasons. Twelve percent of my child migrant respondents recalled that their parents migrated solely because of their children. Four per cent did not migrate with their parents and a further four per cent did not know why their parents chose to migrate to Australia. The remaining 80% said that the children's future was a major consideration in their parents' decision, although not the sole reason. Other reasons given included sound employment prospects, a better climate, rejoining family already living in Australia and hopes of a better future for the entire family.

Of course, the assisted passage schemes were crucial to the migration decisions of most, for the crossing was otherwise beyond the financial capabilities of the average British family. Research indicated that up to 75% of the assisted families would have been unable to finance their passage, which in 1965 was about £600 for a standard fare for a family of two adults and three young children.[14] Australia would have received only a fraction of its post-war British migrants if not for generous assisted passage subsidies providing competitive edge over closer emigrant destinations, including Canada and South Africa.

The British in Western Australia

Of the 400,000 added to the Australian population by British immigrants between 1954 and 1981, the largest contingent of 90,000 settled in Western Australia.[15] Together with South Australia (86,000), these two states had made the greatest efforts to target them. By the Sixties, 17.3% of all United Kingdom immigrants to Australia arrived in Western Australia, increasing to 23.2% for the period 1970–73. No other migrant group of this period demonstrates this constant upward trend. In 1964, a Western Australian immigration office was set up in London by the state government. Western Australia soon developed a reputation as one of the most active states in terms of recruiting British migrants. By 1971, the proportion of Western Australian residents born in the United Kingdom was 55.5%, compared with the national average of 42%.[16]

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[13] Lack and Templeton, p. 128.
[14] Hammerton and Thomson, , p.33.
[15] James Jupp, 2004, p.146.
[16] John Jackson, *Changing Patterns of Post-War Immigration to Western Australia.*. Ruth Johnston, (Ed.), *Immigrants in Western Australia,* University of Western Australia Press, 1979, pp's.21, 24.

The Perth British contingent spread along the south coast to Rockingham and inland towards Gosnells and Armadale. Jupp notes that, whilst the Perth areas favoured by the British had some levels of unemployment and a working class majority, they lived in property-owning suburbia with low levels of state housing and did not face the serious social problems linked to unemployment that were to plague their South Australian counterparts. However, there were problems in the new town of Medina during the 1960's, which attracted many British immigrants with the development of the new Kwinana oil refinery. Medina's 35km distance from central Perth saw it become isolated and lacking in social amenities, transport systems and infrastructure. Protests and discontent in the area saw a high rate of British returnees. Press coverage and a 1964 official enquiry by the State immigration minister saw it dubbed a new 'Pommy ghetto'.[17] As with their eastern-states counterparts, the majority of British immigrants who settled in Western Australia favoured a respectable suburban existence. Areas of Perth, including Stirling, Wanneroo, Gosnells, Armadale, and Kalamunda continue to demonstrate a high British representation, but have never been dominated by this demographic. As Jupp notes, there have been few 'English', 'Irish' or 'Scottish' suburbs established in Australia.[18]

Inland fishing and open spaces: Reasons to choose Western Australia

In 1961, the Western Australian state government sent W.S. Lonnie on a mission to Great Britain to recruit British migrants. Displays and film nights promoting Western Australian were soon set up in all major cities of the British Isles.[19] The Lonnie Scheme successfully attracted many migrants to Western Australia, which had a booming economy during the 1960s. Many British emigrants were sponsored by employers, particularly those with professional qualifications or experience in the building trades. The state's mineral wealth led Australia's economic resurgence during this era, when large mining projects included bauxite and nickel in the Darling Ranges and oil in the north-west. Processing plants set up in Rockingham and Kwinana increased the need for skilled workers, attracting many British migrants to the area.[20]

[17]Jupp, 2004, p.148.
[18]Jupp, 1991, p.65.
[19] Caunt, pp's 59-60.
[20] Caunt, pp's. 81, 128.

The open spaces and sheer expanse of Western Australia incited Bert Slack to choose this state and he still chuckles ruefully at the memory:

> We had lots of leaflets given in England, of what Australia was, for each different state. You'd to choose which state you'd go to. I saw all these lakes in Western Australia. Masses of lakes, out Kalgoorlie-way, inland and all that. And I did a bit of fishing in England, and I thought, Wow, there must be an awful lot of fishing out there! I didn't know that they were *salt* lakes…until we'd actually arrived here! We found out that there was no fishing to be had, as such. But it was all pre-drawn up, so we landed here, anyway…got off the boat and started our life here.[21]

Of my participants, 91% initially disembarked and lived in Western Australia. The remaining 9% went to Brisbane (Queensland), Elizabeth (South Australia) and Sydney (New South Wales) respectively. The Western Australian settlers listed employment as the main reason (64%), followed by natural attractions (15%), having family in Perth (12%) and the climate (6%). The remaining 3% were not given an option as to their port of disembarkment, which was also true for those who initially disembarked and settled in the eastern states. Almost all of my participant group today live in Western Australia, with the exception of a UK resident who travels frequently to Perth visiting family and two others living in Melbourne.

The migration decision: But what about the children?

During the period 1955–60, over 75% of assisted British migrants consisted of family units, of which at least 61% were families with children. During this second generation of Ten Pound Poms, those aged between 0-19 made up almost 40% of total numbers, all of whom were welcomed to Australia as future workers and citizens.[22] It was generally assumed that migration was good for children, who would readily adapt and thrive in a healthier climate with a less restrictive lifestyle. The reality was often not as simplistic, for they were rarely consulted upon the migration decision and many today recall a 'confusion of feelings'.[23] Caunt's research also found that children were mostly not included in the family's decision to migrate.[24]

It is not surprising, then, that none of my child migrant participants recalled being actively involved in the migration decision. Whilst 26% were aged under seven-years-old at the time and would assumedly have been excluded from the decision-making process, and 2%

[21] Interview Bert and Milly Slack.
[22] Hammerton and Thomson, p.360.
[23] Hammerton and Thomson, p.85.
[24] Caunt, p. 72.

migrated independently under the Big Brother scheme, the remaining 72% were aged between seven and fifteen years old. Similarly, my parent migrants did not recall involving their children in this life-changing decision. Stuart Slack, who was aged seven when his family migrated, recalls that it did not occur to his parents to consult the children: 'There was no [involvement] whatsoever: it was, "Little boy, shut up and do what you are told". That's the way it was in those days'.[25] One of my child migrants was matter-of-fact about her parents' life-changing decision: 'As a nine-year-old, it was just, what was, really. I don't think I ever formulated the view that I wanted to go back: it was just that my family was here and that was it'.[26]

Generally, younger children seemed better able to cope with the excitement and confusion of the move than their older or teenage siblings, who often struggled with the 'impending loss of the network and relationships of an emergent and independent adolescent identity'.[27] Reactions from these older children varied from reluctance to outright resistance. Gail Nock was fifteen when she migrated with her family to Australia, following a transient childhood while her father served in the British army. Gail recalls:

> I don't think that we [the children] had much to say about it: to us, it was just another move at the time. I know that when we were actually leaving to go to Australia, I didn't want to go. I didn't want to leave all my friends behind, again. I think I was sick of travelling by then: packing up and moving on.[28]

Yet other older children I talked to recalled that migration to Australia was seen as a wonderful adventure. Chris Pepper, who was fourteen at the time, recalls 'going to those interviews [at Australia House] with my fingers crossed, hoping and praying we'd get approved.'[29] Alan Fouweather was 'over the moon…I thought it was the biggest adventure I was heading on, ever. Being the eldest, I think I took to it more than my younger brothers. I was only twelve, but they were much younger: nine, six and two. I thought it was great! This was the big adventure I was going on'.[30]

Some older teenagers actively chose to remain behind in Britain, yet for the most part, young people were still legal dependants of their parents until they were 21 and were usually

[25] Interview Stuart Slack
[26] Interview with child migrant, [name withheld] arrived 1966, interviewed 23 June 2010.
[27] Hammerton and Thomson, p.86.
[28] Interview with Gail Nock [child migrant], arrived 1972, interviewed at her Mount Richon residence on 28 June 2010.
[29] Interview Chris Pepper.
[30] Interview Alan Fouweather

expected to migrate with their family. Many left behind extensive social networks, educational and employment opportunities. Caunt reported traumatic departures by older daughters with long-time boyfriends. One daughter was engaged and had to leave her fiancé behind.[31] Not surprisingly, many of these young adults were angry and humiliated at being forced to comply with such a momentous decision. Most did successfully adapt to Australia, but some returned to Britain as soon as they were legally and financially able to do so. Valerie Joubert was a reluctant migrant of twelve, who 'didn't want to go and wasn't impressed when I got here'. Her sister, Karen Gardner, was eight and recalls that Valerie tried unsuccessfully to swap her seat on the flight with a more enthusiastic English cousin. Both sisters had high expectations of returning to England once the two-year minimum term was up:

> Karen: We were always told we were going to go back…one day.
>
> Valerie: But we were never going to be able to afford to do it.
>
> Karen: But she [our Mother] never said we weren't. And I suppose that's what you hang onto, at that age. It was always *when* we were going to go back, instead of *if.* First, it was going to be, At the end of the two years…then it was going to be, In another couple of years. I remember her saying, 'In 1975, we're going to go back'. But, of course…we were never going to.[32]

Processing, procedures, paperwork….and packing up and leaving it all behind

For families with children, leaving Britain was almost always difficult. The new migrant family faced the bewildering and emotional logistics of dealing with bureaucratic obligations, selling up, settling affairs and farewelling family, friends, peers and neighbours for an extended period, which sometimes turned into forever. Whilst the Ten Pound Pom scheme made migration financially possible for families, return visits were usually economically out of reach for at least the first few years. [33] Although Australian entrance requirements for British migrants had officially relaxed to the point of requiring nothing more than sound health and good character by the late 1960's, some of my participants shuddered as they recalled the myriad of administrative and processing requirements. Jean and John Richardson explained:

[31] Caunt, p. 98.
[32] Interview with Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert [child migrants], arrived October, 1970, interviewed on 7 April 2010 at Karen's Byford residence.
[33] Hammerton and Thomson, p.87.

> Jean: The rigmarole we had to go through—medicals, paperwork, interviews…there was loads and loads. They accepted us eventually, but it wasn't easy.
>
> John: The questions they'd ask…they always said to Jean, 'Are your mother and father alive?' And she'd say, 'No.' And that counted as a tick for us. They'd never ask me…my parents were both alive, even Jean's grandparents. We never knew that we'd never see them again, or we might have thought twice about coming.[34]

Jean regarded this line of questioning as invasive at the time, yet the rather callous caution demonstrated by the immigration officers was not surprising. Wives were generally less enthusiastic about emigrating than their husbands, in particular for Commonwealth nominees. They faced an unknown future in a far-off land and were required to dismantle their entire lives and farewell close family and friends. Husbands often bore the brunt of the migration decision, which could severely test their marriage. Often, the decision to return was instigated by the family matriarch.[35]

Following the processing of application forms for assisted migration, the final stage in the selection process was for the entire family to undergo an interview by an Australian selection officer in their nearest major city and also to pass a medical examination. The interview was usually only a formality but most migrants took it very seriously. Bert Slack confirmed: 'We had two interviews, and we had to take the children. They were all dressed up, in their best bib and tucker. They required all family members to attend this meeting—it was the norm'.[36] It was compulsory for immigration officers to sight all of the children declared. The reason for this requirement has never been officially confirmed, although several of my parent migrants said that it was to verify their colour. There is no doubt that the White Australia policy was strongly enforced at the time, recalling a notorious aspect of Australia's migration policy.[37] My father, Henry Dewsnap, migrated in 1969 and noted that the 'White Australia policy wasn't enforced; but it was certainly… preferred, yes'.[38]

Whilst many migrants underwent rigorous medical examinations to exclude those who might become a burden on the state, others described the official interview and compulsory medical

[34] Interview with John and Jean Richardson [parent migrants], arrived December 1969, interviewed 15 February 2010 at their Wanneroo residence.
[35] Appleyard, 1988, p.65.
[36] Inteview Bert and Milly Slack.
[37] Hammerton and Thomson p.90.
[38] Interview with Henry Dewsnap [parent migrant], arrived December 1969 interviewed 10 February 2010 at his Belmont residence.

and chest x-ray (to rule out tuberculosis) as 'superficial'.[39] My father-in-law, Harry Fouweather, suffered pneumoconiosis, which is a lung disease caused by the inhalation of dust—a legacy of two decades spent working in the Yorkshire coal mines. He was relieved to pass his health checks, noting that 'they never said anything about the medical, when I were in England.' In hindsight, Harry suspected that he was 'rubber stamped' for migration, in spite of his health, on account of having 'four strapping young sons for Australia'. Unfortunately, Australian mining authorities did not extend him the same leniency upon arrival; Harry was unable to qualify for a Miner's Ticket due to his x-ray results. He recalled his discussion with the medical officer at Lake View Star mines in Kalgoorlie:

> So this doctor takes me in his office, puts up me x-rays and says, 'Look at this–I've never seen a case as bad as this!' So I says, 'Well then, you ain't seen many'. 'Doctor says, 'Never go near a mine in Australia, never! I feel very sorry for your wife and young children…you haven't long to live. I suggest you place your affairs in order.' I were 41 years old.[40]

Harry's promised lucrative mining job at Lake View Star Mining in Kalgoorlie fell through as a result, leading to years of financial strain and hardship for his family. The mine's doctor was correct in one respect; Harry never did work in the mining industry in Australia. Fortunately, his medical diagnosis was less accurate, as Harry passed away in May 2011, at the rather more respectable age of eighty-four years old.

Polio and diphtheria injections were required of all family members prior to departure, regardless of age. Denice Fouweather recalled her youngest son's immunization with a chuckle:

> We all had to have injections, and I can remember coming back ont' bus. Our Paul—he were only two when we came here—he says, 'Ooh Mummy, my prick hurts!' Well, everyone looked 'round, and I did struggle to keep a straight face. So I said, 'Well don't rub your arm, love, because you'll make it worse'.[41]

Assisted British migrants were required to surrender their passports prior to departure for two years in return for 'documents of identity', ensuring they could not return within the set two years without repaying the balance on their outward fare.[42] Eunice Bullimore recalled that 'We didn't have passports; we had a Document of Identity. We flew out—we decided that

[39] Hammerton and Thomson, p.89.
[40] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather .
[41] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather
[42] Hammerton and Thomson, p.89.

was the quickest way and we'd get on with it. We got to the airport and it was a chartered flight; they'd put yellow stickers on it. We felt like refugees, it was really bad'.[43]

The 1958 Appleyard survey confirmed that capital realisation was a necessary feature of emigration to Australia. Many migrants waited over a year to receive confirmation of their migration acceptance, to be then given an average of only six weeks from notification to departure. This constituted a stressful period of frenetic activity. Cargo space on migrant vessels was limited and freight costs prohibitively expensive. This necessitated the forced sale of possessions, often in a buyers' market at bargain prices. Items that could not be sold had to be given away or, worst of all, destroyed or thrown away. Most home owners sold their houses prior to departure, and very few took heavy consumer durables with them such as cars, furniture and washing machines. This forced liquidation of family belongings remained a bitter memory for many migrants, who had to pay many times more to replace items in Australia which had been sold for a fraction of the price in England.[44] Long-time friends and fellow British child migrants, Jeremy Griffiths and David Thomas, confirmed that both of their parents had endured similar circumstances:

> Dave: We came with a shoebox and that was about it, I think.
>
> Jeremy: My Mum talked about this. She said that a lot of what they had would be antiques now, worth a lot of money. They had a lot of Victorian furniture…and it was really heavy. They couldn't sell it and ended up having a bonfire in the yard to get rid of it. I think there were also hassles with the house not selling before they went; it was all pretty worrying for them.[45]

It was often particularly hard for children to farewell, perhaps forever, close friends and family and leave the only surroundings many had ever known. Treasured yet bulky possessions, such as bikes, could not be taken with them and belongings that were taken to Australia often had to be stored for long periods until a suitable residence for the family could be achieved. John Richardson spent eighteen months at Graylands hostel with his family while their new house was built. John recalled, 'We had six or seven big crates; suitcases, as much as we were allowed to bring…By the time we got them out of storage, eighteen months later, the kids had outgrown their clothes and toys!'[46]

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[43] Interview Bullimores
[44] Appleyard, 1988, p.64.
[45] Interview with Jeremy Griffiths, arrived 1969, and David Thomas, arrived October 1970 [child migrants], interviewed 28 June 2010 at Jeremy's Bedfordale residence.
[46] Interview Richardsons

Leaving beloved family pets behind was also the cause of much heartbreak. The Richardson family had to leave behind their three-year-old Boxer dog, Alex, when they migrated in 1969. Their story was featured in the local media, as Jean and John explained:

John: While we were still at the hostel, getting ready to leave, *The Sunday Times* would have a 'Dog of the Week'—they used to have a big photograph of the dog and they used to give it [the dog] to the best letter.

Jean: And it was the same as the dog we had to give away in England—a Boxer dog.

John: And I wrote for it, I went for an interview—and we collected it! We had her for seven years.

Jean: It was lovely when we won—the kids were heartbroken

Happiness over after 8 years

The Richardson family, of Greenwood, lost one of their best friends recently.

After sharing a happy home and life together, Jenna, their lovable pet boxer dog, died.

Jenna was featured in The Sunday Times as Dog of the Week, eight years ago.

She was just three years old and had been abandoned by her previous owners.

Soon after arriving in Perth from England, Mr and Mrs John Richardson, saw Jenna's photograph in the paper.

"She reminded us so much of our last dog, Alex, who was also a boxer, that we just had to have Jenna in our home," Mr Richardson said this week.

"Unfortunately, before we left England, we had to find a new home for Alex although we longed to take him with us."

Own dog

When the Richardsons first arrived, they lived in a hostel and although they desperately wanted Jenna for their own, they were unable to collect her until their new home in Greenwood was built.

"The staff at the Shenton Park Dogs' Refuge Home agreed to keep Jenna with them until our home was built," Mr Richardson said.

"When it was finally ready, the whole family — including Jenna — moved in."

Jenna became blind soon before she died.

Life is no longer quite the same at home for Mr and Mrs Richardson and their children Bev, 19, Gaynor, 17, and Derrick, 15.

After having two boxer dogs in the family, they say they could never have another dog because there would always be comparisons made between Alex, Jenna and the new pet.

"We were all very upset and sad when Jenna left us, but we shared many happy times together," Mr Richardson said.

"But we are grateful to The Sunday Times and the Dogs' Home for giving us our beautiful Jenna and many happy memories to remember her by," he said.

The Sunday Times' feature of Jenna which appeared eight years ago and began a happy companionship with the Richardson family.

when we had to give the dog away in England to come here. She went to friends. But to get the same dog, the same breed…was wonderful. She was gorgeous. We had a new house and a new dog.

John: When she died, we didn't have a photograph of her. So I rang *The Sunday Times* to see if I could get a copy of their photograph, and they did an article on us. It got front page of the paper **(previous page)**.

Family is happy again with Banjo

By FRANCINE BROWNE

Banjo couldn't decide whether to growl or wag his tail when he saw five strangers walk in the front gate of his master's home yesterday.

So, he did both — much to the delight of the Richardson family, of Greenwood.

Last week, Mr and Mrs John Richardson were featured in The Sunday Times with a photograph of their boxer, Jenna, that had died recently of a brain tumor.

The article caught the attention of Mrs Greta Hickling, of Beaconsfield, whose son Mark, 21, died of the same disease last month.

Before he had died, Mark had bought Banjo to keep him company.

However, with already two corgi dogs in the family, Mr and Mrs Graham Hickling could not keep Banjo as well.

"We love Banjo very much and could not have given him to just anyone," Mrs Hickling said.

"So when we saw the article in The Sunday Times, I decided to let the Richardson family have the first option.

"They seemed like a really marvellous family, and I am thrilled they have decided to make Banjo a part of their family."

At first, Mr and Mrs Richardson felt they could not cope with having another boxer soon after Jenna's death.

But their eldest daughter, Beverley, managed to talk them into taking Banjo.

"I think Banjo is absolutely marvellous," Mrs Richardson said.

"We are now one big happy family again."

Banjo was the centre of attention yesterday when he formally became a member of the Richardson family. Pictured with the boxer are (back, from left) Mrs Jean Richardson, Mrs Greta Hickling, and Mr John Richardson, and (front) Gaynor (17) Derrick (15), and Beverley (19).

> John: But then, it goes further…we had a phone call from *The Sunday Times*, saying a lady had been in touch with another dog we might like. Her son [the dog's owner] had passed away with a brain tumour and she couldn't keep him because she had a dog of her own, so she offered him to us after seeing us in the paper. So we were in the paper again! **(previous page)**.[47]

Many migrants recall the trauma of seeing their life's possessions distilled down to a pile of bags, suitcases and crates. Jack Bullimore recalled: 'We came out with one case, on a crate…about three foot high and one foot deep. That was our whole life. And we had two hundred pounds—and the two kids'. His wife Eunice adds: 'Yes, times were tough, then. Not as tough as the Pioneers or anything, but we were still starting from scratch. The good thing about it was, you focused on getting on, because you knew that you couldn't go back. Not in our case, anyway; it was just us.'[48]

Follow-up interviews conducted by the Appleyard team in 1967, at the end of a six-year period in Australia, asked what advice they would give to intending British migrants. Most respondents said they would encourage them to bring to Australia as much of their furniture as possible—a recollection that overshadowed the much larger financial challenge of buying a house.[49] Valerie Joubert's early memories of Australia are clouded by these early struggles:

> We were given very limited information when we first came, as to what to bring with us….but some people were given even less. We at least brought blankets, and the basics to set up a home. But we didn't bring furniture or a car. We were always told that it wasn't economically viable to bring stuff like that…but it certainly was. You got nothing in England for selling your cars and furniture; you more or less gave them away, thinking you'd replace them over here. We were told that it would be cheaper to buy another one [car] when we got here—but it didn't work out that way. We couldn't afford it and cars were no cheaper in Australia, anyway.[50]

It was only the more well-off families who could afford the costs of freighting bulky household goods to Australia. They were rewarded again upon arrival, as they were spared the excessive cost of replacing whitegoods and household appliances at Australian prices.

Many migrants recall 'the practical and psychological importance of the arrival of their packing crates from home'.[51] Some were unable to start adjusting to their new lives until they

[47] Interview Richardsons.
[48] Interview Jack, Eunice and Mark Bullimore.
[49] Appleyard, 1988, pp's.73, 77.
[50] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert
[51] Hammerton and Thomson, , p.142.

were able to surround themselves with personal belongings which establish a sense of 'home'. When I called in to interview her, Milly Slack proudly pointed out the 'pottery and knick knacks' displayed in the Armadale home she helped build with her husband Bert and son Stuart in 1976: 'All the things we owned. All the stuff in here is from England.'[52]

Misinformation and lack of information: Were they informed?

The Ten Pound scheme gave Australia a competitive edge in attracting Britons, but the campaign also had to be 'sold' to prospective migrants. Australia House was set up in London in 1946, and was the first overseas administrative branch of the Department of Immigration. Offices would eventually be established across the United Kingdom and Europe in the following decades. Teams of officers were sent overseas to implement the recruitment, selection and processing of the vast numbers of prospective immigrants.[53] Jupp notes that there is no record of the level of enthusiasm of these staff, whose main objective was to bring over as many British migrants as possible.[54] During the height of the assisted passage schemes during the 1960's, Australian migration offices were situated throughout Britain: in London (where every Australian state had an immigration office), Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol and Leeds, as well as in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Accusations of misinformation were regularly levelled at Australia House by disgruntled returnees, which the Australian Immigration Department refuted. A promotional flier entitled *For only £10* concedes that 'the climate varies considerably, but generally is temperate. It is never really cold…'[55] Not surprisingly, some of my participants contradicted this rather optimistic view. Denice Fouweather recalled that when they arrived in Fremantle in April 1968, 'it were teeming wi' rain; freezing. And I thought, 'Welcome to sunny Australia!'[56] Valerie Joubert stated that 'There was a lot of…misinformation and lack of information'. Her sister Karen Gardner echoed the suspicions of many disillusioned British migrants, wondering; 'Maybe to get people to come, they didn't want to tell you too much? They just

[52] Inteview Bert and Milly Slack .
[53] Peters, p.59.
[54] Jupp, 2004, p.144.
[55] Caunt, p. 69.
[56] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather

wanted to give you enough [information] to get you interested…and you faced the consequences when you got here'.[57]

Rosemary Davey migrated in 1966 as a ten-year-old. Fortunately, she has only positive recollections of the services and information supplied by Australia House:

> They used to send out, once you'd been accepted, little activity sheets to the children. Of course, we were just converting to decimal currency then. That helped get us ready for the currency we were coming to …we had quizzes to do and things. I think they prepared you quite well. I remember sitting in Australia House watching a film about Australia [with] the big spools and the projector. People always seemed to be at the beach and stuff like that—it looked very exciting! I don't recall ever feeling sad or disappointed when we got here.[58]

Of course, promotional and informative material can only be of benefit if it is actually read and understood. The 1958 Appleyard survey indicated otherwise, with a quiz based upon information booklets from Australia House returning an average score of only 54.2%. Singles fared worse than married couples, although, as many of this demographic sought only an extended working holiday, this was not surprising. Undoubtedly, many British migrants knew little of the 'Australian' way of life when they arrived.[59]

The continuing success of the Lonnie Scheme continued to attract British migrants to Western Australia. By 1965, State Premier David Brand doubled the number of recruitment teams in Britain and representatives from the Western Australian Employers' Federation were included.[60] The Fouweather family was sponsored by this organisation, but after a month of hostel accommodation and disappointing job prospects, patriarch Harry found the relationship to be less than satisfactory and decided to try and do something about it:

> George Hogan [a fellow migrant] says, 'You know Harry, I'd letters [from them] too—saying we'd be met off the ship, jobs and all that.' Well, one day it were raining and we couldn't do no bricklaying. So we went to St Georges Terrace, asked to see the Western Australian Employers' Federation. We go up the lift, into the office, and the nice man says, 'Hallo, chaps, what can I do for you?' I says, 'You sponsored us to migrate here'. So he looks up our names, says 'My God, we did, too!' So we asks him, 'Well, what about these letters, then?' He smiles and says: 'Well, we got you here anyway, didn't we?' Well, George Hogan had the man over the desk by his shirt and I said, 'Put him down, George!' I had to make him let go of the man.

[57] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert.
[58] Interview with Rosemary Davey, arrived September 1966, at her Roleystone residence on 8 March, 2010.
[59] Appleyard, 1964, pp's.154, 195.
[60] Caunt, pp. 59-60.

> Before we left I said, 'I wish to be repatriated'. He said, 'Why?' I told him: 'I was brought here under false pretences.' The man replies, 'Ah, so you can take Australian money back with you.' I said, 'So I can take *my* money back with me!' Money that I brought over—for selling me house and car and everything. It wasn't a good reception when we got here.[61]

Harry's unfortunate experience was the most extreme reported by my participants and may well have not been the norm. However, misinformation charges to Australia House and immigration staff were commonplace and disillusioned British migrants accounted for up to 25% of returnees during the peak years of the assisted passage era.

They don't know what we went through: the 'whingeing Pom' label.

The treatment of English newcomers by Australians is perhaps best demonstrated by the prolific use of the term 'Pommy', which some historians suggest was originally derived from 'pomegranates' named after the red and blistered faces of new migrant arrivals after weeks of travel under an unaccustomed sun. It was also interpreted as a colonial reference to 'Prisoner of Old Mother England'.[62] The Australian-born became increasingly sensitive to the authority and criticisms of British authorities, visitors and settlers, an attitude that became deeply ingrained within Australian working-class culture. It was unfortunately reinforced in the 1960s by the Bodyline cricket series and the Bank of England's intervention in the Australian economy.[63]

These ingrained attitudes were strengthened with the post-war push for British migration. By the 1960s, many Australians believed that the 'Ten Pound Tourists' were lucky to escape from post-war British poverty and should think themselves lucky to be in Australia, the land of opportunity. Many resented the extended working holidays taken at taxpayers' expense (although the British countered that they paid enough tax during their two year stay to repay their passage several times over) and there were unfounded fears of locals missing out on jobs taken by Britons. Vince O'Neil reflected on his childhood migration experience from an adult perspective, concluding that:

> I can look back and see where they [the Australians] were all coming from, asking "Well, why are they letting all these Poms in? Coming in, taking our jobs." And that's a frightening thing—if that's what they all thought, we were really behind the eight ball. And yet, in England, the publicity machine was in overdrive; a lot of

[61] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.
[62] Betka Zamoyska, *The Ten Pound Fare: experiences of British people who emigrated to Australia in the 1950's.* Penguin, London, 1988, p.51.
[63] Hammerton and Thomson, p.146.

> people came [to Australia]. We thought we were wanted and needed, for labour and all that.[64]

Many Australians also considered that the British received a much better deal than their European counterparts, who were perceived as hardworking and uncomplaining in comparison. Australian reactions to British complaints, which were widely publicized in the popular press, ranged from outrage through to ambivalence. Any suggestion that British ways or products might be superior was widely resented.[65] Roger Dallas recalled the challenges faced by his father upon his introduction to the Australian workplace:

> My father found work easily enough...but he still had a few problems about being called a Pommy Bugger, too. [In England] he was one of the top guys for British Rail. So he was working for one of these Australian mining companies, laying railway lines—supervising—for the iron ore carriers. And he was trying to tell them, You're doing it wrong, that the sleepers had to be laid a certain way, or one day they would have a derailment. They said, 'You don't know what you're talking about'…So, he left...and a few months after, well, they had a derailment.[66]

It was not surprising that the British migrants were the most critical of conditions in Australia, compared with 'back home'. Lacking the desperate motives of many of their European counterparts, they came voluntarily and from a similar economic background to Australians. By the 1960's, most British migrants enjoyed a cruise-style voyage over and expected similar accommodation upon arrival. They also did not share the language and cultural barriers of many European migrants. Ironically, these advantages could also render them ill-prepared for such a tremendous transition, which required them to come rapidly to terms with a culture that was 'unexpectedly different'.[67]

The Appleyard surveys indicated that few English migrants escaped taunts about their 'Pommy' origins, which for the most part were good-natured and used as a means to 'test' the newcomers. Most shrugged off such comments, in particular those with firm intentions to settle permanently in Australia. My mother recalled that 'some [locals] used to get quite stroppy—I just ignored them. Many people went home, they couldn't take it; we'd get teased about being Ten Pound Poms, and all that. It was more of a joking thing, really, but some found it hurtful'.[68]

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[64] Interview Vince O'Neil. .
[65] Hammerton and Thomson, p. 147.
[66] Interview Roger Dallas.
[67] Lack and Templeton, p. 88.
[68] Interview Glennis Dewsnap.

British migrants were also more informed of their rights, and many had no qualms about voicing discontentment about their treatment. Because their voices were consequently the loudest, it seemed that they complained the most, and it was on these that the popular media focused. Criticism was readily levelled at these 'pampered' newcomers and the label 'whingeing Poms' was widely coined.[69] Migrant protests and disgruntled comments to the media by returnees produced some heated exchanges between the British and Australian press throughout the 1960's and into the 1970's, with damaging consequences for continued high immigration targets. Denice Fouweather explained:

> I mean, people say, "Oh, whingeing poms, whingeing poms"—but they don't know what we went through when we got here. We didn't get…it just wasn't what we'd been told to expect. They said they had jobs waiting for us, but when we got here and asked at 'office about jobs, they just gave you the morning paper. We were promised lovely houses for nine dollars a week rent...but I wouldn't keep chooks in some of those houses.[70]

Johnston's 1968-69 survey of Western Australian British immigrant families firmly refuted the 'whingeing Pom' stereotype. Far from being highly unsettled and constantly complaining, the research indicated that the British were well settled and most intended to make Australia their permanent home. Married women were often reported to be the instigators of the family's return decision, but of the 25 families interviewed, only three of the wives wanted to return home.[71] Today the overwhelming majority of my group, spanning two generations of Ten Pound Poms, have permanently and successfully settled in Western Australia. Many of their recollections, however, confirm the findings of recent studies that their transition to Australia was often traumatic and that many of these 'whingeing poms' did, indeed, have something to complain about.

The Young Ones: Adventure, sunshine and opportunity

For many young British migrants—in their teens or early twenties—their Australian experience was a rite of passage of sorts that is remembered as a 'profoundly formative period'.[72] These 'sojourners', or temporary residents, have often been excluded from migration studies. Whilst their return rate of 50% was twice as high as British migrant families, their presence in Australian society was an indelible part of the migration boom

[69] Lack and Templeton, p.15.
[70] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.
[71] Ruth Johnston, *British, German and Polish Immigrants,* cited in *Immigrants in Western Australia,* University of Western Australia Press, 1979, p.42.
[72] Thomson, A., 2003, p 62.

years.[73] Unlike their married counterparts with children in tow, young single migrants were free from family responsibilities. Short-term and casual work was fairly easy to find and financed further travels. For these 'young ones', migration was more about fun and adventure than about a long-term commitment to another country. The Ten Pound Pom scheme made the 'working holiday' affordable to young people for the first time. Australian immigration officials were well aware of the transient intentions of many young singles, but were confident that many would decide to stay and perhaps encourage family and friends back home to migrate. Few young sojourners intended 'bludging' during their stay, planning to work to finance their travels. Not surprisingly, over half of the planned two-year stays became unexpectedly permanent. Many found spouses or prosperous careers in Australia, or simply fell in love with the climate and more relaxed lifestyle and remained.[74]

By 1967, charitable child migration was essentially over in Australia, with the advent of new social realities and the extension of the welfare state in Great Britain. Yet thousands of young adults came to Australia after World War II under agencies including the Boy Scout Association and the Young Catholic Workers' Movement. Another was the Big Brother Movement, founded in Sydney in 1924 by Sir Richard Linton, to encourage large-scale youth migration from the British Isles.[75] Over 12,500 teenagers came to Australia this way, including seventeen-year-old Patrick McGlone. He was inspired to emigrate after reading in the local newspaper of a chap who had travelled to Australia utilising the Big Brother scheme. Pat readily admits that he gave little serious thought to his migration decision: 'I was young—a bit of adventure, all that land out there, all that sunshine, all that opportunity. Do you want to join the party? Yes, please!'[76]

The Big Brother Movement was another 'arm' of the assisted passage scheme and provided an immigration programme specifically for boys aged between sixteen and nineteen. The boys, known as Little Brothers, were chaperoned by Big Brothers—adult members of the movement who were responsible for them during their passage to Australia. Each Big Brother had to undergo a strict selection process, requiring them to be of sound and respected character. The Little Brothers were usually not orphaned or from broken homes, and those under eighteen had to have their parents' permission to travel.[77] Patrick McGlone recalls that

[73] Hammerton and Thomson, p.248.
[74] Lund, p.136.
[75] Coldrey, B. p.7
[76] Interview Patrick McGlone.
[77] Lund, p.129.

the scheme was 'non-political, non-religious…it was just basically a place for us to come to.' The boys' passage was free, although the two-year minimum stay applied. Pat travelled with a group of 23 Little Brothers who were chaperoned on board by two Australian schoolteachers working their passage back to Australia. These 'Escort Officers' would 'organise us for PE and games on deck and make sure that no one got out of control, or had too many drinks or anything like that'.[78]

Over half of the female workers, who made up 21.7% of total British migrants, were young single girls who were not really migrating, but taking advantage of a two-year 'working holiday' on offer in Australia.[79] Well into the Sixties, it was expected that young women would stay at home with their parents until marriage. The assisted passage offered an alternative to marriage, particularly in the case of young working-class women, who were able to leave the parental home and experience their own independent life, transcending the social expectations of the time.[80] Many came, not in search of marriage, but of adventure and opportunity.

Hammerton and Thomson note that these young single migrants formed an entirely separate category of migrants to the British families. Young singles of the Sixties and Seventies were influenced by the idealistic youth culture of the time, and many relinquished a unique British identity. This second generation of postwar sojourners were more open to flexible and long-term travel opportunities, and blazed the path for today's young backpackers.[81]

The voyage of Orstralia: Travelling by sea

The two and a half decades after the war represented the last great age of ocean-going migration, before jet aeroplanes became a more practical and economic alternative to bridge the huge distance. Of the British post-war migrant diaries that have been made available to researchers, it is significant that the majority are of the sea voyage to Australia.[82] The extended voyage, whilst varied amongst migrants in its level of comfort, invariably gave them time to adjust to their migration decision, relax and recuperate after the frenetic chaos of packing up and leaving, and allowed for some level of mental preparation for the new life

[78]Interview Patrick McGlone.
[79] Appleyard, 1964, p.126.
[80] Hammerton and Thomson, p.256.
[81] Hammerton and Thomson, p.263.
[82] Thomson, 2003, p.203.

that lay ahead. Typically, the twelve thousand mile voyage, through the Mediterranean and Suez, then across the Indian Ocean to Fremantle, took four weeks. Appleyard makes the point that, once the ropes had been untied and the vessel floated out into the harbour, they were truly, for the first time, migrants.[83]

Post-war migrant transport to Australia culminated in a great flotilla of 169 ships that carried 2 million passengers until 1977, by which time air travel had completely taken over.[84] Well into the 1960's, the allocation of shipping berths to assisted migrants was something of a lottery. More fortunate migrants travelled with the P & O and other British shipping companies, under arrangements made by the Australian government. A block of cabins on each of these liners sailing to Australia was pre-booked and assisted migrants enjoyed tourist-class cabins, access to on-board amenities and entertainment, British food and advice from non-assisted passengers. This situation often caused on-board tensions between full-fare-paying passengers and assisted migrants, as the former had paid top price for their tickets and were resentful of the 'Ten Pound Poms'. John Richardson noted:

> There was quite a bit of rivalry between the Aussies who had been on holiday…I remember one of them having an argument with the Purser once: *This lot are eating and drinking exactly the same as us and they've only paid ten pounds…we've paid full fare!* There was a bit of bad feeling…they might have paid £50 one-way, you see. But we had to give up everything [for that cheap fare]…we knew no one when we came out, only the ones we had met on the boat. Some had friends, relatives…not us. It was a huge decision—but we did it for the kids.[85]

Britons allocated berths on *Fairsea* and *Fairsky* were less fortunate; these were converted carrier escorts owned by the Italian Sitmar Line and were smaller and less stable in heavy seas. As with many migrant ships of this era, the passengers came from all over Europe and the crew and food were Italian.[86] Alan Fouweather christened the mix of ethnicities on board the *Aurelia* in 1968 a 'League of Nations', noting that there 'was every language imaginable spoken'.[87] As a seventeen-year-old, Patrick McGlone was disappointed that the on-board multiculturalism segregated the passengers, in particular the young ladies: 'There was certainly a language barrier there. All of the English-speaking people kept together. I tried

[83] Appleyard, 1988, p.66.
[84] Richards, 2008, p221.
[85] Interview Richardsons.
[86] Appleyard, 1998, p.65.
[87] Interview Alan Fouweather.

occasionally to talk to the Finnish girls, but they didn't have a lot of English, either'.[88] Bert and Milly Slack encountered some colourful personalities during their multicultural voyage on board the *Ellenis* in 1970:

> Bert: A Dutchman used to get drunk every day and he'd go into the Purser's Foyer and dance. And he'd go into the cinemas at night and stand in front of the screen, dancing. This particular morning, at ten o'clock in the morning, he's drunk as a lord. He hopped over the side—as she's going full bore down the strait! At least he wasn't that drunk that he forgot his life jacket…
>
> Milly: He didn't fasten it, mind. The crew were having a life drill, and the bells started ringing…
>
> Bert: And a boat isn't like a car- you can't just put the brakes on. They estimated the ship had to go down about five miles before she could start turning. And he was still drunk as a lord [when] they picked him up, and he's still waving his life jacket and singing. So they locked him up until we got to Cape Town, and then they chucked 'im off.[89]

Individual experiences of the voyage differed greatly, influenced by personal expectations and, often, by the luck of the draw in terms of the standard of vessel allocated to each individual family. My participant group recollected experiences that ranged from an unimaginably luxurious cruise that was remembered as the holiday of a lifetime, to a travesty of the expected crossing. Many carried their experiences (be they negative or positive) with them and applied them to their new lives. Others experienced bitter disappointment as subsequent hostel accommodation failed to meet shipboard standards.

[88] Interview Patrick McGlone.
[89] Interview Bert and Milly Slack.

Right: excerpt from the passenger list (including the Fouweather Family) ***Aurelia,*** **1968**

Port of Disembarkation.....Date.....Sheet N°.....

Serial N°	Passenger's Surname and Initials		Indicate by V whether British	Indicate by V whether non British	Intended Address in Australia
50	CRUMMACK	L.S.	V		C/- Hostel, PERTH, W.A.
51	CUMMING	A.S.	V		C/- CROOKS, Ltd. FREMANTLE, W.A.
52	DAVEY	H.	V		56 Burwood Rd. BALCATTA 6021,PERTH,W.A.
53	DAY	J.E.	V		C/- 104 Clontarf Str. MARMION 6020,W.A.
54	-"-	P.	V		do
55	-"-	A.J.	V		do
56	DE HEER	C.	V		10 Lyall Str. South PERTH, W.A.
57	-"-	A.P.	V		do
58	-"-	M.M.	V		do
59	DEN HOED	N.		V	C/- 20 Visser Str. COOL BELLUP,W.A.
60	-"-	P.		V	do
61	-"-	S.		V	do
62	-"-	V.		V	do
63	-"-	M.		V	do
64	DE WALL	P.A.		V	27 Kelvin Str. MAYLANDS, W.A.
65	-"-	E.M.		V	do
66	DUCKETT	C.A.	V		C/- Imm. Dept. pERTH, W.A.
67	-"-	J.	V		do
68	-"-	M.C.	V		do
69	-"-	J.C.	V		do
70	DUTTON	M.E.	V		do
71	ELLIS	B.	V		15 Harrison Str. TUART HILL, W.A.
72	-"-	D.	V		do
73	-"-	R.	V		do
74	ERINDS	E.		V	C/- Imm. Dept. PERTH, W.A.
75	-"-	T.		V	do
76	-"-	J.R.		V	do
77	-"-	J.		V	do
78	-"-	A.		V	do
79	-"-	C.		V	do
80	FARNELL	R.J.	V		Point Walter Reception Centre, FREMANTLE,W.A
81	-"-	P.	V		do
82	FERRILL	D.W.	V		C/- Imm. Dept. PERTH, W.A.
83	-"-	O.M.	V		do
84	-"-	E.M.	V		do
85	FOLEY	J.	V		do
86	-"-	M.	V		do
87	FOUWEATHER	H.	V		Point Walter Reception Centre,FREMANTLE,W.A.
88	-"-	D.	V		do
89	-"-	A.H.	V		do
90	-"-	J.	V		do
91	-"-	M.	V		do
92	-"-	P.	V		do
93	FRANKLIN	I.H.	V		C/- Imm. Dept. PERTH, W.A.
94	-"-	J.V.	V		do
95	-"-	D.J.	V		do
96	-"-	M.R.	V		do
97	GARTH	E.B.	V		Baggage Islands Rd. CARNARVON, 6701, W.A.
98	-"-	J.	V		do
99	-"-	C.	V		do

M/S."AURELIA" .....

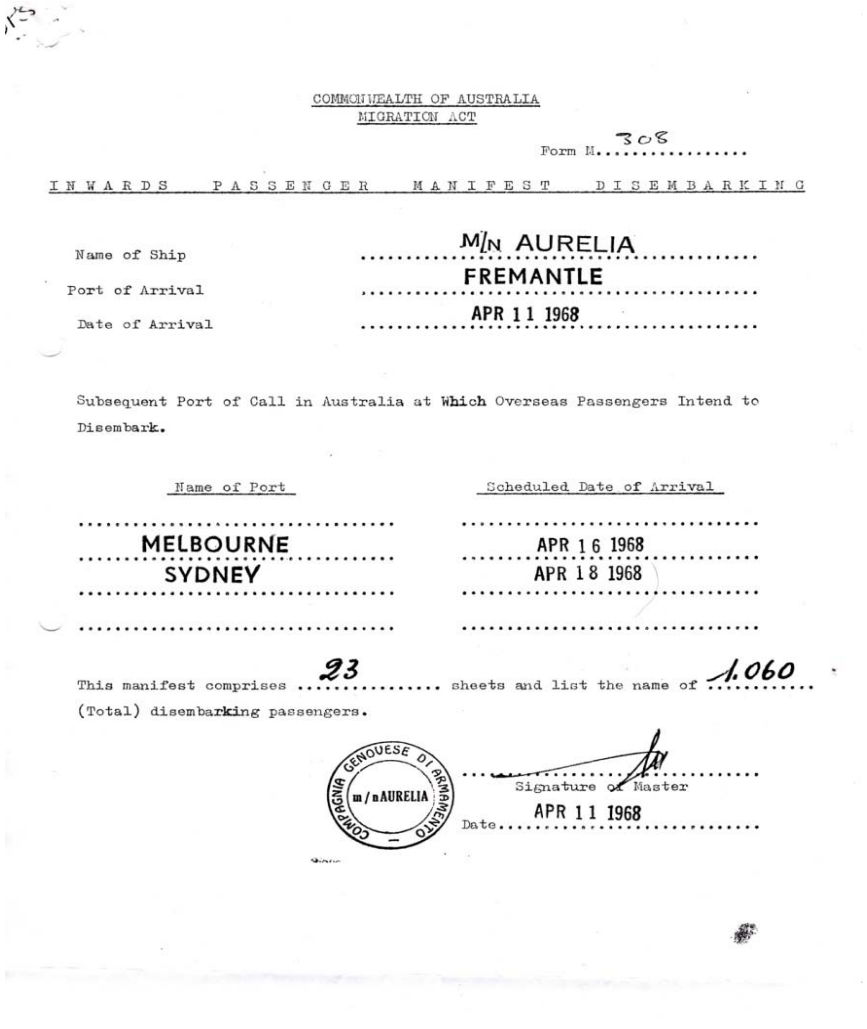
Passenger liner travel was, by the mid-1960's, becoming more luxurious as the post-war shipping fleets were progressively retired and replaced by custom-built vessels, complete with air-conditioning, stabilisers and faster travel. The two main carriers, P & O and the Orient Line, invested in a pair of liners that would cut the sea journey between Britain and Australia by a full week. Lunn recounts that the Orient Line invited the Australian public to suggest a name for the new ship. The popular consensus was that the name be prefixed with 'Or' in keeping with tradition; the Orient Line already included *Orion, Ormonde, Orsova* and *Orontes*. A 'certain character' suggested that *Orstralia* would be a good name, but the new liner was eventually named *Oriana.*[90]

The sea crossing often brought together Britons from all classes, and the cultural life on board was invariably 'a seagoing version of the delights of Blackpool and Brighton'. Commercial

[90] Lunn, p.107.

liners carried assisted passage and full-fare passengers in tourist class, as well as first-class passengers. Consequently, many migrants were upset to discover a class-based 'apartheid at sea'.[91] One participant noted of their 1966 voyage:

> Most of the passengers were British. But there were two levels…let's face it, England was very class conscious. So if you were well paid, as we were, you were put amongst the top levels, but if you were working class, they went below deck—Oh, God, they were so sick. It really was terrible for them. I think it was all decided at the interview; 'Oh yes, you're one of us, just keep quiet'—that sort of thing.[92]



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
MIGRATION ACT

Form M. 308

INWARDS PASSENGER MANIFEST DISEMBARKING

Name of Ship: M/N AURELIA
Port of Arrival: FREMANTLE
Date of Arrival: APR 11 1968

Subsequent Port of Call in Australia at Which Overseas Passengers Intend to Disembark.

Name of Port	Scheduled Date of Arrival
MELBOURNE	APR 16 1968
SYDNEY	APR 18 1968

This manifest comprises 23 sheets and list the name of 1.060 (Total) disembarking passengers.

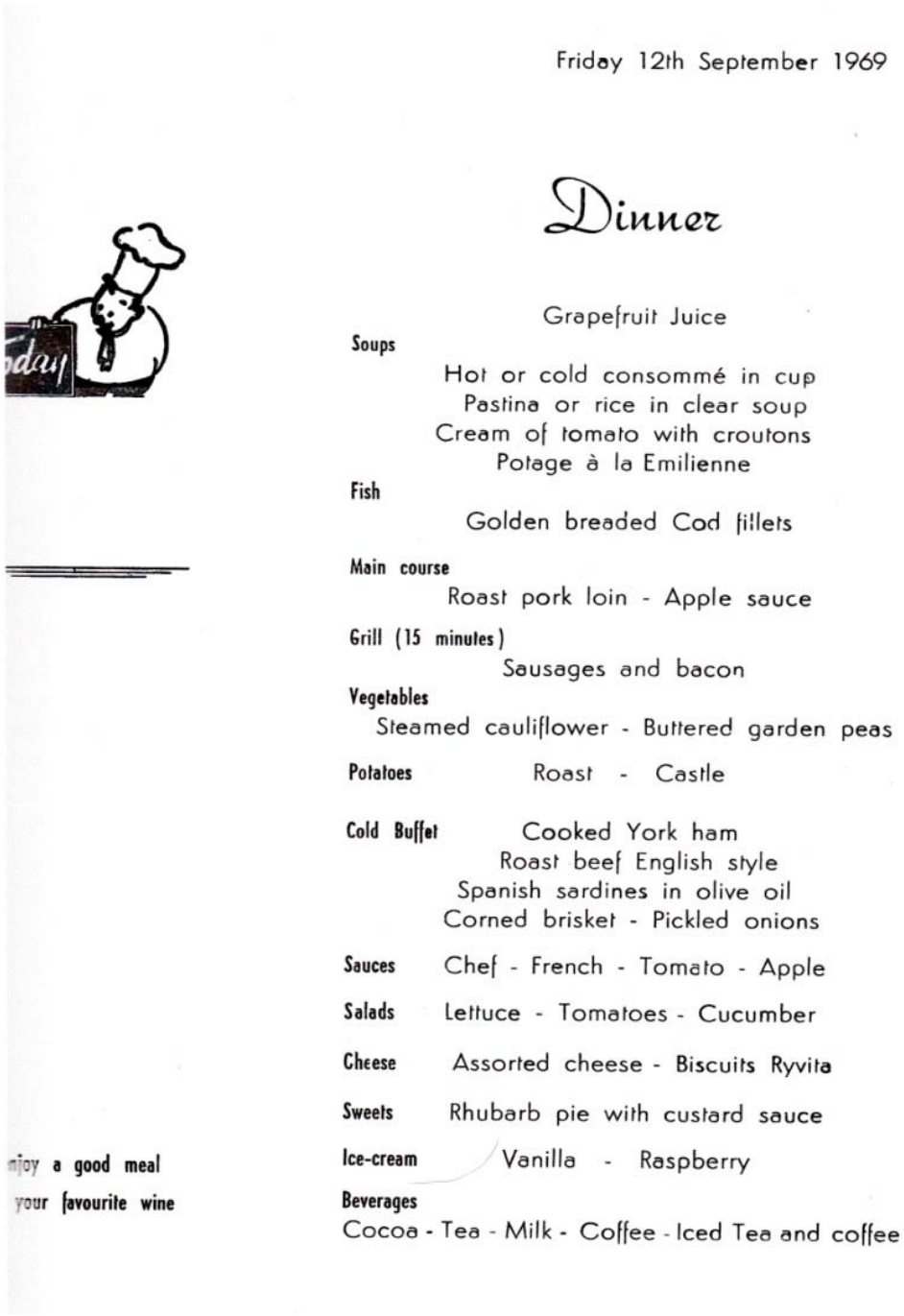
COMPAGNIA GENOUESE DI ARMAMENTO m/n AURELIA

Signature of Master

Date APR 11 1968

Left: Inward Passenger Manifest—*Aurelia, 1968.*

[91] Hammerton and Thomson, pp's 106, 107.
[92] Interview [Name withheld- parent migrant] arrived 1966, interviewed 11 March 2010 at her residence.



Friday 12th September 1969

Dinner

Grapefruit Juice

Soups
Hot or cold consommé in cup
Pastina or rice in clear soup
Cream of tomato with croutons
Potage à la Emilienne

Fish
Golden breaded Cod fillets

Main course
Roast pork loin - Apple sauce

Grill (15 minutes)
Sausages and bacon

Vegetables
Steamed cauliflower - Buttered garden peas

Potatoes Roast - Castle

Cold Buffet Cooked York ham
Roast beef English style
Spanish sardines in olive oil
Corned brisket - Pickled onions

Sauces Chef - French - Tomato - Apple

Salads Lettuce - Tomatoes - Cucumber

Cheese Assorted cheese - Biscuits Ryvita

Sweets Rhubarb pie with custard sauce

Ice-cream Vanilla - Raspberry

Beverages
Cocoa - Tea - Milk - Coffee - Iced Tea and coffee

njoy a good meal
your favourite wine

Left: dinner menu from the *Aurelia*, 1969 (courtesy of Sharon and Jeremy Griffiths)

Many migrants quickly settled into the routine of shipboard life and enjoyed themselves. Seating was usually pre-allocated and many lifelong friendships began during mealtimes. These early friendships pre-empted social networks that would substitute for the extended family and close friends that had been left behind.

Left: Daily activities program from the *Fairsky*, 1968 (courtesy of Sharon and Jeremy Griffiths)

Jeremy Griffiths was five when his family travelled on board *The Fairstar* in 1969. He recalled:

> My Mum and Dad met some friends on the boat, and stayed in touch with them for a long time. They're not in contact with them any more…but for years, they were Mum and Dad's best friends. It's funny, I still think of Marge and Norm from the boat as 'Aunty Marge and Uncle Norm'. They were just people we met on the boat…but to the kids, they were like family.[93]

Children generally ate earlier than adults and would often be put to bed by the time their parents dined. Some vessels provided crèche and part-time schooling for older children. There were usually numerous activities on offer to ward off boredom, as well as a separate deck for leisure amenities. Depending on the ship, on-board entertainment included dinner dances, film nights, variety nights, pantomimes and church service.[94] John Richardson discovered his inner thespian during on-board variety nights, recalling: 'I did a couple of concerts. Performing…I was an angel once. Had me white dress on, a bit of wire up there [twirls his finger above his head] with a halo on top'.[95]

Children were usually well catered for, with fancy dress parties, schooling in the mornings, games and special events, including the 'Crossing of the line' ceremony as the ship crossed the equator, where crew or passengers would dress up as King Neptune.[96] One child migrant was nine-and-a-half years old when her family migrated in 1966 and recalls:

> I remember when we crossed the equator…It was a ceremony by the pool during the day and someone was dressed up as King Neptune. At night, there was a fancy dress party and everyone got dressed up. I was dressed up as a 1920's Flapper and I had a band around my head. I can't remember [where the costumes came from]; we must have had access to the costumes, because I had a photo and we were all dressed up, and we didn't take them [along with us]. I remember it being fun…there were some good memories.[97]

[93] Interview Griffiths and Thomas.
[94] Hammerton and Thomson, , p. 102.
[95] Interview John and Jean Richardson.
[96] Zamoyska,1998, p.39.
[97] Interview child migrant, [name withheld].

Denice Fouweather recalls a fancy dress organised on board to give the children something to do: 'They just gave you all this crepe paper and you did what you could with it and we ended up making them inter' pixies **(right)**. I don't know how we fastened them together, whether it were sticky tape, or sewn…there was Mark [son, on right] and his friend who was an Estonian boy, but I can't remember his name'.[98]

Jeremy Griffiths was only five when he migrated with his family in 1969, but his on-board escapades have become the stuff of family legend:

> The only other memory I had— I guess because my parents talked about it when I was a kid— is when my sister and I, or may have been all three of us kids, were in fancy dress. I think it was one of the things they did for an evening's entertainment. And Mum dressed me in a fig leaf, made from crepe paper. Just a fig leaf. And it fell off. But I ended up winning! So I was destined to become a stripper…[99]

[98] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.
[99] Interview Jeremy Griffiths and David Thomas

Left: When Jeremy Griffiths travelled on board the 'Fairsky' in 1969, each child on board was given a sailor doll as a souvenir of the voyage. (Photo courtesy of Sharon and Jeremy Griffiths)

Not all migrants were able to enjoy their cruise, whether luxurious or not, for seasickness afflicted many—seemingly at random. Some suffered short bursts of illness before they found their sea legs, whilst others endured weeks of misery. The Bay of Biscay usually disrupted mealtimes as the rough conditions kept many in their cabins until the calmer seas of the Mediterranean were reached. Patrick McGlone 'enjoyed every minute on board' but noted the extremes of weather experienced during this voyage which covered half of the globe. He recalled being issued with a camp bed whilst cruising through the tropics and sleeping up on deck (which he described as 'heavenly') to escape the suffocating heat in the cabins. He also vividly recalled the extremes of rough conditions on board:

> We sailed on the 22nd December...a very rough crossing, going through the Bay of Biscay. I guarantee that everybody on board was sick. It was horrendous…and if you could stagger up to a meal, you'd get your plate on the table and *whoosh!* It'd all be thrown to the other end of the table. And they used to have a kind of bracket, on the end of the table to stop the plates from shooting over. But it was that rough they'd hit that and just bounce over.[100]

[100] Interview Patrick McGlone.

Harry and Denice Fouweather feared for their safety on several occasions on board *The Aurelia*:

> Harry: In the dance hall, there were a rope tied around all the columns…thick ropes for you to cling on to. And where you would have normally gone outside—the companionway—this timber were slotted in, so if you tried to go outside, you'd have to climb over. But if you opened 'door—Pheeww!! The sea would have just washed you over. Seven foot of water coming straight at you; it ran straight off, down the port end. We'd watch it from the windows of the dance floor.
>
> Denice: It rained solid for two weeks. So we never went out—they [the crew] told you not to. For two weeks.
>
> Harry: Sometimes, going across that Indian Ocean…I never realised that the ocean was so *big*. There were holes coming up, and mountains on each side; holes you could have put five ships bigger than ours in. I'm telling you, there were times I knelt and crossed myself on that voyage.[101]

Fortunately, the Fouweather family made it to Fremantle safely, where they learnt that their misgivings about the safety of the *Aurelia* were justified:

Left: Upper deck of the *Aurelia*—one of the unsafe lifeboats is visible in the background. (photograph courtesy of Denice Fouweather)

[101] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather

> Denice: It were a frightening journey at times. We didn't know at this stage about the flippin' lifeboats—if we'd had known about that, we'd have been *really* scared.
>
> Harry: The boat were delayed leaving from Fremantle. You see, 'Port Inspector got on board and found it straight away: the davits—the rollers what you launch them on—were all frozen solid with salt water. You couldn't have launched any lifeboats. They'd to use some CRC or summat to make them work again…'boat weren't allowed out of Fremantle until every single one worked to the Inspector's satisfaction. We'd come all that way; fourteen days with conditions like *that*—passengers with broken bones, bruises, from getting thrown about—and we never knew the lifeboats didn't work.[102]

Newly married couples were a common feature amongst migrant liners, and jokes about temporary room swaps, spare keys and the search for empty lifeboats in order to find some intimacy were commonplace. Privacy issues were often exacerbated further by the routine separation of families onboard well into the 1960's. Harry Fouweather was placed in a smaller cabin with another young man, while his wife Denice and their four young sons were given a larger cabin. This situation led to considerable embarrassment for Harry:

> Harry: Aye, I were in a separate cabin at 'end. And there were only a young fellow in wi' me. And I says, 'Ow yer going?' We got chatting, and I says, 'What type of passage are you on, then?' And he says, 'I'm on me honeymoon!'
>
> Well, they put 'er [his new wife] in a cabin with another four women. I thought, Well, that's a bit rough. Anyway, I went back one time, and she were on top of 'im in bed! I said, 'I *am* sorry. Put a suitcase across 'doorway (there were no locks on the cabins) and I'll know not to come in.'
>
> Denice: Well, that's when he moved in wi' us and let them 'ave cabin on their own.[103]

Parents with young children were particularly challenged by shipboard life, as the myriad of passages, steps, railings and doors often seemed at direct odds with the family-focused nature of these voyages. One participant recalls that, in addition to suffering constant seasickness the entire voyage, she also nearly lost her adventurous five-year-old daughter overboard.[104]

The British migrants invariably experienced their journey and stopovers en route as 'excited tourists', visiting exotic places they had heard about, perhaps dreamed of seeing, but never thought it was possible.[105] Most voyages allowed for at least three stopovers en route, at exotic locations, including Port Said, Suez, Aden, Los Palmas, Columbo and perhaps Ceylon; as Thomson noted, 'the route of the migrant ships evoked resonant British imperial

[102] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather
[103] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.
[104] Interview adult migrant [name withheld].
[105] Thomson, 2003, p.208.

images and understanding about the Middle and Far East'.[106] Many spent more than they should have on souvenirs, cheap watches, jewellery and duty free drinks and found their average £300 nest egg per family severely depleted by the time they reached Australia.[107] Patrick McGlone experienced the exotic sights of Ceylon first-hand:

> Back home in Nottingham, my neighbour's daughter and her husband had gone to live in what they called Ceylon [now Sri Lanka]. So we went ashore in Colombo [the capital], and they met up with us and took me to their house. They had servants, too: we'd be sitting out on the verandah and she'd ring her little bell and out they'd come with the iced tea…a great experience.[108]

These exotic port stopovers on the Suez Canal route were promoted by competing shipping companies keen to attract passengers. However, the canal was closed during 1967-75 following the Arab-Israeli wars, forcing passenger ships to revert to the old route down the west coast of Africa and around the Cape of Good Hope.[109] Roger Dallas recalled that 'we were on the *Castel Felice* **…**and we were the last boat to go through the Suez Canal, just before they shut it before The Seven Days war. So we had to have an army escort on and an army escort off'.[110]

South Africa competed fiercely with Australia for white British migrants at a time of stringent apartheid. Locals received generous commission for 'recruiting' Ten Pound Poms en route to Australia. Some of my participants were approached during stopovers in South Africa, although all were uneasy about the country's racist apartheid policy. The Fouweather family went ashore in Cape Town in 1969 and experienced the realities of apartheid juxtaposed with such persuasion tactics first hand:

> Denice: In Cape Town, you could've eaten off the streets. It were spotless, no litter…we went into the Post Office to get stamps. We'd just walked in there when this woman drags us out: 'Oooh, come out of there, dear', she says. 'Look at 'sign! Blacks only—and you're white.'
>
> Harry: I says, 'Does it matter?' That's what caused all these problems—Blacks only, Whites only. On 'buses: 'Blacks would be crammed in like chooks at the back and in the front would be just a couple of whites, with the front all to themselves. The front [of the bus] were white, the back, black; two separate doors.

[106] Hammerton and Thomson, p.111.
[107] Appleyard, 1988, p66.
[108] Interview Patrick McGlone.
[109] Journeys to Australia 1940s-60's: 1940's-60s: A journey for many. *Museum of Victoria, Australia.*
[110] Interview Roger Dallas.

These cops were talking to me, trying to get me to stay. There were two of them, Glasgow Scotsmen. I heard one of them say to his mate, 'Look at this family—four boys!' He comes up to me, says: 'Don't get back on 'ship, mate. Stay here.' I says to him, 'I have a lot of gear on that ship, mate, and I'm contracted to go to Australia.' So the cop says, 'We'll get your gear back from Fremantle; send it straight back here. I'll find you a nice house; your wife will have two servants and private schools for your boys. You'll work for Shell Oil, I can guarantee that.'

Denice: There were one family; they did get off there. They came on board and took all their belongings off. Took all their suitcases.

Harry: For the first two or three years [in Australia] I did wish I'd stopped. We'd have been better off then—but not now.[111]

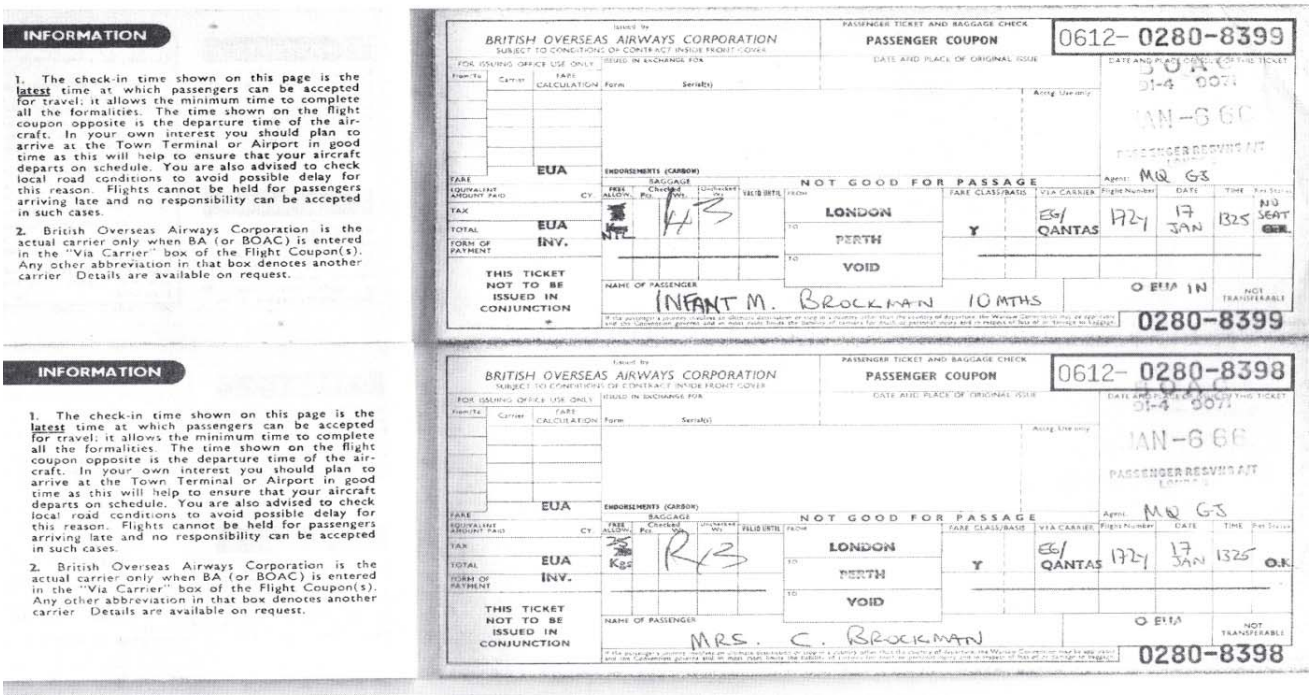
Left: Cape Town in 1968—Table Mountain is visible in the background.

(Photograph courtesy of Denice Fouweather)

Welfare and immigration officers were placed on board migrant ships to provide information and to help prepare migrants for their new lives in Australia.[112] On-board films, slide shows and informational pamphlets were usually available to educate migrants about Australia. Not surprisingly, their offices became busier during the last few days out of Fremantle, as migrants drew closer to the reality of their decision made half a world and another lifetime ago. Reaction to their experiences varied with each individual, yet all agreed that the journey by sea provided vivid memories to be relived and retold for the rest of their lives.

[111] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.
[112] Appleyard, 1988, p.67.

Three days in the same clothes; Australia by air



Above: 1966 assisted passage airline tickets for Michelle Beor (nee Brockman) as a ten month old infant and her mother Carol (courtesy of Michelle Beor)

By the mid-1960's, the efficiency and economy of the aeroplane was rapidly replacing sea voyages as the most popular means of conveying British migrants to Australia. By 1967, half of the British emigrants made the journey to Australia by air, utilising assisted passage schemes.[113] Many opted to fly, either preferring to make the journey quickly, wanting to save money or fancying the novelty of a relatively new mode of transport. Others came at the urgent request of a new Australian employer. Some families were given no choice and were allocated plane seats as arbitrarily as shipping berths, often with as little as ten days' notice.

Whatever the reason, flying provided a vastly different travel experience for British migrants, compared with the extended cruise of their seagoing counterparts. Although the journey by air was extremely short in comparison with the sea crossing, the former was often physically and mentally exhausting. Many reported nightmare flights of cramped conditions, delays, no

[113] Richards,2004, p. 267.

sleep and disorientating jetlag lasting for days and sometimes weeks. Rosemary Davey flew to Australia with her family in 1966 and recalled:

> We flew over—Dad didn't want to waste more time on a boat! Even that was quite a trek, back then…we stopped off at Rome and Zurich..and New Dehli and Rangoon…Singapore. There were quite a few stops, so I think it still took 24-26 hours. We'd done quite a bit of flying, but for some reason I had a bad reaction and was quite sick. I do remember Mum saying that if we hadn't landed when we had that they would have had to take me off the plane, I was that airsick. I don't know why—I hadn't had a problem before. It was just so long…or maybe it was something I ate.[114]

Sisters Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert were eight-and-a-half and twelve years old respectively when they migrated with their family to Australia by air in 1970, arriving at four-thirty in the morning. The family flew out of England on October 22, their journey complicated by the September hijacking of five planes bound for the United States by terrorists belonging to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).[115] The sisters recalled the flight vividly:

> Karen: Three days...in the same clothes, with no shower! On and off the plane...most people came by boat, and we were offered [a sea passage]…but Mum didn't want to.
>
> Valerie*:* We were dressed in winter clothes [when we left England]…and every country that we stopped in was hot! It was the first time we'd been in that kind of heat…it was quite strange.
>
> We went through Tehran, as well; you couldn't get off the plane, because that was after one of the hijackings. I remember it was dark and looking out of the window…and there were armed guards on the tarmac. And it was just sand, everywhere you could see…You could see in the dark, because it was all lit up…and I thought, Oh, it must be a desert!

By the end of the 1960's, the flight from Britain to Australia averaged between twenty-four and thirty-six hours.[116] This gruelling haul by modern standards was made yet more challenging by the presence of young children travelling in these confined spaces, as Valerie recalled:

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[114] Interview Rosemary Davey.
[115] Pierre Tristam, *The 1970 Palestinian Hijackings of Three Jets to Jordan*: *Jets are blown up in the Jordanian desert.* 'About.com: Middle Eastern Issues'.
[116] Hammerton and Thomson, p.119.

> It was a 707 charter plane…and it had six seats across; three on each side and the aisle down the middle. Probably smaller than what they fly over east in now! There being six of us, we were three and three. Mum had Annette with her and Dad and we got Adrian on our side, with us. So we were trying to amuse a three-year-old the whole time. [Adrian was 3, Annette was still a baby]. The flight staff] were pretty good— Mum said they used to do the bottles for her and everything. [117]

Michelle Beor was a ten-month-old baby when she flew on BOAC Airways to Australia in 1966 with her parents. Her mother told her that the flight took two days and Michelle did 'feel very sorry for my mother with a baby on a plane for all that time— it would have been horrible!'[118]

The most crucial difference for the migrants travelling by air was the lack of time in which to adjust to a new life. They were deprived of the opportunity to prepare themselves for the challenges that lay ahead, form supportive relationships on board or recover after the frenetic pre-departure preparations. Long-distance travel had become easier, yet the sense of dislocation, or 'culture shock', resulting from emigration was often more acute than in those who had made the extended journey by ship. Instead of the vivid memories of the 'adventure of a lifetime' recalled by many of the seafaring migrants, the flight to Australia, whilst novel and exciting, was little more than a means of getting from A to B.[119] Valerie keenly felt this stark contrast:

> If you were on a boat, I suppose you would've made connections and friends. On the plane…I suppose you could liken it to refugees. You were told where to go, and it was, 'Don't go anywhere else!' You had no papers, no passports or anything. So you had to stay with your group…you were shifted from one spot to another [then] back on the plane; it was quite strict. It's not until later, you realise; we had no papers, and if we'd wondered off…there would have been problems.[120]

The journey to Australia was ultimately a memorable and significant event in the family history of these migrants, irrespective of their mode of passage.

[117] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert
[118] Interview Michelle Beor.
[119] Hammerton and Thomson, p.120.
[120] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert.

Chapter Four: Early days

This brand new land and everyone's all excited: First impressions of Australia

The reception in Australia for new British migrants invariably hinged upon the circumstances of their nomination status, whether personally sponsored by friends or relatives, future employers or the Australian government. The Appleyard survey found that Commonwealth nominees were less satisfied with their migration decision than personal nominees, who usually had close friends or relatives to stay with upon arrival. Commonwealth nominees did not know anyone to nominate them in Australia. They often did not know with certainty their port of disembarkment in Australia, as this could be decided by immigration officials shortly before arrival in Fremantle, depending upon hostel accommodation and employment availability in each state. They were generally semi-skilled, with three or more children, had an average of £300 to their name and the prospect ahead of a year or more in a hostel. Appleyard aptly describes them as 'modern pioneers'.[1]

Fremantle was the first Australian port of call for passenger and migrant liners, and was eagerly anticipated by emigrants after weeks at sea. David Thomas recalls the arrival of *The Australis* in Fremantle harbour in 1970, when he was seven:

> My very first memory of seeing Australia was all the kids sat at the front of the boat, with all their legs hanging down from the bow. I suppose it wasn't very safe—not with my Dad around, anyway! My sandal slipped off my sock….maybe that's why I went barefoot all those years, they couldn't afford to buy me another pair of shoes. We're at this brand new land and everyone's all excited… and there's my Dad [telling me]: 'As soon as we're on land, you're going back to get that bloody thing!' So I was shittin' myself, thinking I was going to have to swim back into bloody Fremantle harbour to get it.[2]

As incoming ships carrying migrants entered Gage Roads, an official party consisting of doctors, customs, immigration, bank and quarantine officers boarded near Fairway Buoy off Rottnest Island. The Old Dingo Flour Mill, as it still is today, was one of the first prominent features seen by the new arrivals on the approach to Fremantle Harbour from Gage Roads.[3]

[1] Appleyard, 1988, p.59.
[2] Interview Jeremy Griffiths and David Thomas.
[3] Peters, p. 324.

Not exactly the Waltons: First accommodation in Australia.

During the 1960's, domestic standards were rapidly changing in both countries, and accommodation conditions varied greatly, according to circumstances. Problems were often caused by assumptions held by Australian sponsors that British working-class families all lived in 'urban slums or rural poverty' when, in fact, by the Sixties most were used to comfortable and modern housing standards.[4] British migrants often struggled to adjust to Australian weatherboard houses, including wood chip water heaters, wood stoves, septic tanks and outdoor 'dunnies'.

Accommodation was usually left up to young single people or childless couples, who, by the 1960s, generally started off in a boarding house or a cheap city hotel. Patrick McGlone was initially lodged at a Sydney hostel with 'forty or fifty' other Little Brothers, who were encouraged to move on and become independent as soon as possible, to avoid overcrowding. He recalls staying at his first rental with a few of the friends he had met on the ship:

> The first house that we rented (we found it in the paper) was actually owned by a Croatian. He didn't understand Planning Permission—he'd bought a house and just kept adding rooms on! He just built and built; did it all himself. I shared—two to a room—with my friend John, and there was probably up to sixteen guys in there altogether.[5]

Personally-sponsored families could also have a challenging start. Often the great effort and generosity of distant relatives or friends in giving up half their house or converting their garage to house an entire family soon became a source of friction.[6] Vince O'Neil's family stayed with Australian relatives in Perth after emigrating from England for the second time and it did not work out well. Vince notes wryly of the experience: 'Well, it wasn't exactly *The Waltons*. Mum doesn't get on with her sister anymore'.[7]

The concentration camps: Hostel accommodation.

For the majority of Commonwealth-sponsored British migrants, hostel accommodation provided by the Australian government represented their first experience of life in Australia, and came as a huge shock. Nissen huts left over from the war were initially used as temporary accommodation, but were still in use two decades later. Labour Senator Jim

[4] Hammerton and Thomson, p.129.
[5] Interview Patrick McGlone.
[6] Hammerton and Thomson, , p.129.
[7] Interview Vince O'Neil.

Ormonde indignantly stated in 1967 that '[t]he Nissen huts were introduced into Australia to house displaced persons…these [British] migrants are not refugees. They come from decent homes in England.' Child migrant Dave Thomas candidly described his family's initial lodgings at Noalimba as 'The Concentration Camp'.[8]

The Commonwealth Nomination Scheme was introduced in 1952 to attract the large numbers of British who could not find a sponsor in Australia. However, the resulting sheer scale of immigrant inflow during this period caused unimagined problems for the Department of Immigration. Australia's mass migration could not have proceeded on such an unprecedented scale had not the State and Federal Governments been able to lease military installations from the Department of Defence, which could be acquired and transformed, both quickly and cheaply enough, to cater for demand.[9] Common problems encountered by the British migrant residents included substandard accommodation, lack of privacy, poor food, inadequate heating and cooling, high rents (which delayed departure into independent housing), and tensions amongst fellow 'inmates'.[10] The segregational aspects of hostel living also tended to delay integration into the wider Australian society, for opportunities to interact were limited and there was a certain stigma amongst locals associated with hostel living. To make matters worse, the hostels were usually located on the verge of city suburbs, providing a considerable challenge to newcomers in their quest to find work. No one, including government officials, considered the hostels suitable for long-term residency, yet housing shortages meant that some families had to remain in hostel accommodation for a year or more. Not surprisingly, return rates amongst hostel-accommodated Britons were higher than their personally-sponsored counterparts.

British immigrants disembarking in Western Australian were initially accommodated at Point Walter military camp, Graylands military barracks, Swanborne army barracks and Dunreath barracks in Maylands. Peters notes that these barrack camps housed between 350 and 400 people and consisted of

> a series of dilapidated buildings, including an administrative block, reception hall, canteen, emergency hospital and medical aid post, butcher's shop and two messes consisting of one immigrant and one staff kitchen, each with an adjoining dining room and twenty-four sleeping huts measuring 18.3 by 5.5 metres.[11]

[8] Interview Jeremy Griffiths and David Thomas.
[9] Peters, p 117.
[10] Hammerton and Thomson, p.167.
[11] Peters, pp's. 117, 121.

Army huts were transformed by carpenters into lounge and bedroom areas, and semi-furnished. Plumbers converted the sanitary service system to a septic tank system and installed additional shower blocks. Families were given larger huts than those provided for the single men.[12] The accommodation was sparse and inferior compared with homes which they had left behind in Britain and not at all resembling conditions promised by Australia House, as Denice Fouweather affirmed:

> When we went to [Australia House in] Manchester, it [the photos] looked like you were going into a restaurant—white tablecloths, cutlery all laid out. But when you got there [Point Walter reception centre], it were no such thing; you got your plate and you had to stand in line and they'd slap the food on your plate and what you didn't eat, you had to scrape off into big bin for your waste. It were horrible. We…didn't think they'd lie to us.[13]

Vince O'Neil's family arrived in 1974 and disembarked in Brisbane, staying at the Wacol migrant centre, which had served as an American army camp during World War Two. Vince recalls his mother's dismay at the facility, which led to the family's return to England three years later:

> The initial landing and migrant centre, I think, was the downfall of my mother. It was all a bit too much for her, too different. She sat on the bed [the first night] and just...lost it.
>
> Brisbane was fairly bad; it was just like aircraft hangars, with rounded rooves. It was hot, humid…and there weren't any air-conditioners, nothing like that! The heat didn't really faze me, but my mother couldn't handle it. You'd go in the toilets, the ablution blocks, and there'd be geckos and moths, cicadas and spiders…it wasn't something she coped with very well.
>
> I think it was a pretty poor facility to bring new migrants to. Three months is a long time to get dumped in an aircraft hangar…All shared ablution blocks, and a Mess Hall. The only saving grace was that everybody was in the same boat. You'd get this 'whinging Pom' thing…and I'm wondering what it is that we were supposed to be so grateful for![14]

In addition to coping with homesickness and the unexpectedly sparse conditions, few of the British had previous exposure to the Australian heat, and of course, the local fauna. Migrant hostel memories invariably encompass these factors, which for many finalised the decision to return. The Bullimore family stayed at Noalimba Migrant Reception Centre in Bateman upon

[12] Peters, pp's. 127 & 137.
[13] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.
[14] Interview Vince O'Neil.

their arrival in 1969, which proved to be a discouraging introduction to Western Australia. Eunice Bullimore explained:

> When we got to Noalimba, they herded us into this big dining room and gave us this…*demeaning* lecture on cleanliness. You know...babies' nappies and all that sort of stuff. I was…disgusted. Perhaps it was something they had to do.[15]

Fortunately, matters did improve for the Bullimores after the shaky start. However, unlike migrant facilities in Point Walter and Graylands, Noalimba imposed a maximum stay of only six weeks, which placed the family under considerable pressure:

> [Conditions were] very good, because it [Noalimba] was only a year old at that time. We were in high-rise flats…near the dining room. They fed us very well, it was really good. The people from the Anglican Church…used to come out and help us a lot. That's how we got help…because we didn't have a lot of money and we had to be out in six weeks. We had to find somewhere to live. We rented a duplex, down the road, actually. The church helped us to borrow some money so we could get on our feet.[16]

Hostel food was also a source of great contention, as many struggled with unfamiliar food, repetitive menus and inflexible eating hours that often did not allow for the late return of workers. Many migrants took matters into their own hands, as Harry Fouweather explained:

> There was no cooking allowed in the cabins; you'd get chucked out. It were so cold we'd bought a little one-bar electric stove. So, we'd take 'mattress off the bed and use the wire underneath; they were those old iron beds, just like I had int' army (I bet that's where they got them from!). We'd put the stove under, tip it on its side and prop it with a brick. Denice would go out shopping to Fremantle, come back with steak and egg, [and bought] a frying pan. Well, people are wandering past, going 'What a lovely smell!'[17]

The high rents and difficult living conditions of hostel accommodation served as the impetus for many migrants to accumulate sufficient funds as soon as possible, in order to be able to leave and find their own home. Lund contends that it was 'a deliberate ploy that these hostels…would be of such a basic standard that their inhabitants would waste little time in seeking work and somewhere better to live'.[18] Melonie Millar's family disembarked in Adelaide in 1969 and quickly arrived at this conclusion:

[15] Interview Bullimores
[16] Interview Bullimores.
[17] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.
[18] Lund, p. 123.

> We stayed at a place called Gepps Cross in Adelaide where they had hostel accommodation. It looked like a 44-gallon drum just cut in half. I think it was much the same all over Australia. And the thing was, they didn't want you to stay long—it wasn't comfortable. There were five families staying in a big (thing!), it was just bedlam. They did that, I'm sure, to encourage you to get off your backside and get out there and get a job and move on. So, of course, that's what my parents did...immediately looked for work.[19]

With entrance requirements as open as they were to British migrants during the 1960's, Lund notes that there was 'no doubt that the Australian hostels were occupied at times by some hopeless cases who showed little likelihood of contributing to Australia's economic future from the first time they set foot on new soil'.[20] Many British hostel dwellers expressed dismay at the defeatist attitudes of some of their fellow migrants, instead actively seeking to mix with Australians, through work, leisure and choice of area in which to live.[21] Jean and John Richardson despaired at some of their fellow compatriots at Graylands migrant centre, who seemed unable even to attempt to make a life in Australia:

> John: But one bloke [and his family]...they stayed there [at the hostel] for 2 years and went back to England.
>
> Jean: Some of them didn't even unpack. You had to stay for two years, or pay back your fare—and many couldn't afford to. Some didn't even go anywhere, see anything. They just decided they didn't like it and that was that. Makes you wonder what they were looking for…[22]

Many others returned to the United Kingdom as soon as they could afford it, even if it meant repaying full fares for the entire family to the Australian government, together with the cost of return passage for all. In addition to the liquidation of assets needed to travel to Australia in the first place, for many returnees this represented a crippling financial setback with the potential to ruin lives.

Assisted migration intakes peaked during the period 1968-1971, which placed hostel accommodation under yet more pressure. Migrants in the 27 hostels operated by the Department of Labour and National Service jumped from 15,632 in late 1964 to 32,000 the following year. Eighty-three per cent were assisted British immigrants entitled to accommodation upon arrival and staying an average of nine months. In response, between

[19] Interview Melonie Millar.
[20] Lund, p.126.
[21] Hammerton and Thomson, p.144.
[22] Interview Jean and John Richardson.

1967-1970, the government spent $19 million nationally on hostel refurbishment. However, this expenditure owed more to increasing government concern about migrant departure rates and increased competition from an increasingly prosperous European Economic Community, than to humanitarian concerns for the migrants themselves.[23]

Jean and John Richardson directly benefitted from these refurbishments, as John recalled of Graylands migrant centre in 1970:

> We were lucky with Graylands; it wasn't too bad. There was a bus stop right outside and the buildings were brick, not tin huts like a lot of them. First of all, we moved into what they called 'The Spiders', which were brick blocks with eight legs, all joined to a larger central one, which was the ablutions. Three weeks after we arrived, they opened some new double storey blocks, brand new and never been used. They had separate rooms—two bedrooms and a bed settee.[24]

The Richardsons stayed at Graylands for eighteen months. This was six months longer than the preferred maximum time, but they needed this in order to save for a deposit, and then build the family home in Greenwood. Unlike many of their compatriots, they regarded their extended hostel stay as a positive introduction to Australia. Jean worked in the canteen at the migrant centre and their three children went to nearby Graylands Primary School. Jean explained:

> I don't have any bad recollections about the place. We made friends and people had kids, like us. It was lovely when we were building; we'd take the kids and see the house, see how it was coming along…The hostel was quite basic, but it did what it had to do.[25]

Despite the family's traumatic hostel experience, Denice Fouweather readily acknowledged the positive side of their stay at Point Walter reception centre, recalling: 'We used to walk down to the beach with the kids; it were a lovely spot, wi' woods [bush] all around, that sort of thing.'[26] Her then twelve-year-old son Alan demonstrated the often polarized perspectives of adults and children, noting:

[23] Jordens, p. 55.
[24] Interview Richardsons.
[25] Interview Richardsons.
[26] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.

> Point Walter hostel; it was on the river—that looked good. Me and my brother John, we're straight down the river, white as lilies…lucky it was April, so we didn't get sunburnt. It was a bit of hard living…but we made the most of it. I didn't consider that we were roughing it; to me, it was just something new.[27]

The Ten Pound Nomads (with kids in tow...).

A striking aspect of Appleyard's second follow-up survey in 1967, after six years in Australia, was the mobility of the participants: only one quarter had not moved since the first follow-up survey in 1963 and nearly a third had moved two or three times.[28] A level of mobility was necessary to maximise employment opportunities, in order to achieve the popular goal of home ownership in a tight market on a limited budget. However, a clear correlation was also evident from the first Appleyard survey, conducted just prior to migration, which revealed that 73% of all male participants had previously travelled outside the United Kingdom, either on holidays, employment-related or during military service.[29]

Several of my participants experienced a nomadic existence in Australia (at least during their early years) as families went where the jobs were in order to become financially established. Family patriarch Bert Slack fitted the Appleyard demographic, having served overseas during his time in the army. The Slack family migrated to Australian in 1970 and stayed only six days at Noalimba before embarking on a transient lifestyle which lasted almost a decade. Bert's experience as a building foreman in England was initially not recognized in Australia and his income as a carpenter was not enough to make ends meet, let alone get ahead. The family's extensive travel was ostensibly work-related, although Bert and his wife Milly have remained avid travellers to this day. As Milly pointed out, 'We'd come ten, twelve thousand miles, and we said to ourselves, "What's the point of getting over here and just doing what we did in England, if we're not going to see the country?" ' [30] Their son Stuart, who was seven when the family migrated, agreed that 'Dad was like a gypsy…[he] seemed to have a real nomad streak, always has. In that respect, Australia suited them [my parents] better than England'.[31] Stuart recalled that it was often difficult adjusting to this transient lifestyle as a

[27] Interview Alan Fouweather.
[28] Appleyard, 1988, p.76.
29 Appleyard, 1964 ,p.145.
30 Interview Bert and Milly Slack.
31 Interview Stuart Slack.

child, yet his father noted that 'Stuart, out of the three of them—because he's a boy—has become an Australian: there's no English left in him.'[32] Stuart agreed, recalling

> It was shooting, camping, fishing…for me, what a lifestyle; you couldn't ask for anything more. It was great; everything was an adventure. My parents [when I was twelve] had me pretty much strapped to the roof rack [of the Land rover]; if I wasn't holding the spot-light, I was holding the gun. I learnt to shoot and everything at a young age; got my own rifle, and we used to go off—shooting, hunting and fishing. It was a great life…for me.[33]

Stuart noted that his two older sisters did not enjoy travelling to the same extent, citing the difficulties of living in close proximity in a caravan on an extended basis and coping with a fractured education. Eventually, it was the two daughters who called a halt to the family's travels. Milly explained that 'The girls were sick of travelling. We had a caravan and stayed in caravan parks, but they were getting older and were confined'. Their youngest daughter, Carol, estimated that she attended fourteen schools during her childhood in Australia and missed the opportunity to form lasting childhood friendships.[34]

Today, Bert and Millie enjoy a close relationship with their adult children and grandchildren. However, Stuart did point out the generational differences and parental styles that he considers were fairly typical of the 1970's: 'I'd have to say that my parents were pretty oblivious to what we kids went through; Dad did a lot of things to suit himself—'bugger everybody else' attitude. It seems to be a generational thing; that's the way it was in those days'. His sister Carol recalled that 'it wasn't our [the children's] time; it was Mum and Dad's time. We went because we had to go.' As adults, neither harbours lasting resentment about their transient childhood: Stuart confirmed that 'travelling and all that had its ups, but it also had its downs…there was a lot of down sides to a lot of things. But—I don't have any serious regrets.' Carol noted of this period in her life that 'It's not an experience I look back upon with pleasure…but it shaped us and got us where we are today'.

My own childhood was nomadic, again because of my father's work situation. He also worked overseas prior to migrating, when his time as a Deck Officer with the Shaw Saville line took him frequently to Australia. As a Port Inspector and then as a Marine Surveyor for north-west ports, my family spent a few years at a time based between Bunbury, Fremantle

32 Interview Bert and Milly Slack.
33 Interview Stuart Slack.
34 Interview with Carol Kerten [child migrant], arrived April 1970, interviewed 20 March 2010 at my Roleystone residence.

and Port Hedland. I do recall a level of reluctance to form lasting friendships as a child, as I knew that we would not be staying for long. Melonie Millar recalled similar feelings of her early years in Australia:

> You know what, I only made one friend during that time and I still contact this lady, but I did not go out of my way to make lots of friends then. I didn't want to….I just knew that I would have to leave them. We knew we were all going to separate anyway; there was no way we were going to stay together.[35]

My brother-in-law Alan Fouweather was twelve-years-old when his family migrated in 1968. He left behind a scholarship to the prestigious Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Yorkshire, which was seen at the time by his parents as a way out of his working class background in the coal mining district. Alan was given a second chance in Australia when he was accelerated a year and put into John Curtin High School, also on a scholarship program. However, the family moved to Northam soon after, when his father Harry finally found long-term employment on the Northam hospital construction project. Alan was not challenged by the local high school and 'wagged' school for long periods, resulting in being pigeonholed as a troublemaker. He had left school by the age of fifteen, taking on a panel-beating apprenticeship. Today, Alan is matter-of-fact about the path his life took after migrating:

> If I had stayed in England, I'd be an architect or a doctor or something like that. I know my mate Michael—my best friend who I left in England—he's now an architect himself. But…my parents definitely did the right thing in emigrating. Definitely—one hundred and ten percent. I may have been better off if I'd followed through, if I'd stayed in England—financially…but I'd still be in England, freezing to death. Dad knows where his bread is buttered. He'll always think of England as home but he knows that if he'd stayed in England, if he'd stayed in the mines….he'd be dead by now.[36]

Conversely, Gail Nock's migration to Australia in 1972 as a fifteen-year-old was the final overseas journey of a transient childhood. Gail's father was a Staff Sergeant in the British army and he availed of the assisted passage scheme to bring his young family out to Australia when he retired after 25 years in the army. The Nock family lived in army barracks in Wales, Germany (twice), Malaysia and England. Gail's father became interested in Australia after being stationed with 'a battalion of Aussies' in Malaya. Gail recalled 'I can remember Mum and Dad talking about it for years: "When we leave the army, we're going to Australia. It

[35] Interview Melonie Millar.
[36] Interview Alan Fouweather.

was just something they both wanted to do. It had always been talked about as we were growing up and we just accepted it.'[37]

For many of this 'second generation' of Ten Pound Poms, the initial move to Australia was only the first in a series of uprootings that potentially dominated their childhoods. From an adult perspective, most now view these years as formative and exciting and enjoy passing these traits and memories on to their own children. Stuart Slack noted that 'because of my adventurous childhood, my lifestyle has now shaped my children's lifestyle'.[38] However, other child migrants were unsettled by their nomadic childhoods, experiencing a sense of displacement that may well have carried into adulthood. As Gail Nock observed:

> I suppose I've felt a bit unsettled my whole life; we'd just get settled and we'd go somewhere else! We'd do two years here and then move again—it seemed to be two years was the longest we stayed anywhere. So, I didn't feel settled [in Australia] for a good many years, because I was always waiting for the next move.[39]

Brand spanking huge: Working towards The Great Australian Dream.

British migrants of the Sixties and Seventies no longer held the ingrained working-class rental mindsets of many of the immediate post-war generation of Ten Pound Poms that preceded them. For this 'second generation' of modern British migrants, aspirations of a better future and greater opportunities for their children in Australia were invariably represented by home ownership in a decent suburb, with amiable neighbours. Hammerton and Thomson note the happy coincidence that this ordinary, yet challenging, ambition matched the 'Great Australian Dream' of suburban home ownership.[40] Most of the Ten Pound Poms achieved this goal in the long term, yet few did so without first overcoming considerable challenges. Arrival in Australia provided a jarring reality check for most; the Australian housing market was unable to meet the unprecedented demand caused by mass migration, marriage rates and economic development during the post-war decades.

Home ownership was a driving force for Melonie Millar's parents, who came from 'rough stock' in Scotland and were determined to better the working-class, council-house future they

[37] Interview Gail Nock.
[38] Interview Stuart Slack.
[39] Interview Gail Nock.
[40] Hammerton and Thomson, p. 218.

had left behind in order to wrestle for themselves a better future. Melonie noted that the 'quick fix' housing solutions adopted in Adelaide during the late 1960's and early 1970's were met with distain by her parents:

> [Authorities] couldn't wait to put up those little...two houses joined together [duplexes]; that's what it's like in Adelaide…Eight or nine suburbs connected, made up of those kinds of houses. They couldn't get them up fast enough; to throw these tiny, *weenie* little houses up to house the hostel people. And of course, people from the hostels were happy to go to these places because they were brand spanking new! MY parents said, I don't want brand spanking tiny...I want brand spanking HUGE! So we ended up in a very nice house in a very nice suburb, with a brand new school.
>
> When we finally got to our own place, we realised that nobody was going to ask us to leave, no more rent inspections, no more of that rubbish..it was all pretty exciting, and we were proud of my parents' achievements.[41]

The Australian rental market for much of the Sixties and into the Seventies was 'utter chaos' and properties were practically unavailable; the few vacancies advertised demanded exorbitant rates. Migrants of all nationalities competed for virtually any space with a roof, including sheds, garages, carports and caravans.[42] My mother recalled the challenges in procuring their first rental property in Australia in 1969, with three children aged under four in tow: 'It was hard finding a rental with three little kids— could you imagine [as a landlord]—aged one, two and three! When we looked through the paper—[it was] "No children! No children!" It was hard'.[43]

Homebuyers were also adversely impacted by a general shortage of finance for housing, caused by a period of rapid economic growth. During the 1960's a deposit of about $1,500 was required by banks and other lending institutions in order to qualify for a land loan on which to build an average three-bedroom, one-bathroom home, and most of the British migrant families came with much less than that. Obtaining a job and saving as much money as possible became the number one priority for many migrants. Several of my child migrant participants recalled that their parents were extremely driven to achieve home ownership in Australia. Anne-Marie Walker recalled that her parents 'were so hell bent on giving us [their

[41] Interview Melonie Millar.
[42] Hammerton and Thomson, p. 220.
[43] Interview Glennis Dewsnap.

children] the life they wanted us to have that they worked so hard. They came with $1,000 in 1969 and, four years later, we moved into the house they had built in Mount Eliza'.[44]

Embarking upon the long-established Australian tradition of becoming owner-builders was often the only way in to the housing market during a period of tight finance restrictions.[45] It was common practice to seek permission from local council to build a temporary structure, or stay in tents or a caravan, on a purchased block of land. A permanent home was then built as funds permitted, either with the help of contract tradesmen or even 'self-help' manuals.[46] Bert Slack recalled his family's 'DIY' home construction project in Armadale, in which he still lives with his wife Millie today:

> This was just vacant land. So, we set to and drew up the plans and ordered all the gear and we built it ourselves; Stuart [son], Mildred and I. Made the window frames, the door frames, some of the doors…and we did everything bar electric, plumbing and gas—and plastering. We put the roof on and everything. That was 1975; we moved in here in 1976.[47]

Various government and private schemes operated in an attempt to address housing shortages, as well as to profit from the unprecedented influx of new migrants. State-sponsored housing schemes designed to attract British tradesmen and their families were in place by 1965. In the private sector, developers in all states except Tasmania operated sponsorship schemes which provided British migrants with homes to buy upon arrival. Unfortunately for many new migrants, these schemes operated with minimal government regulation. In Western Australia, some building companies, such as the Reality Development Corporation (RDC), sponsored British migrants for assisted passages. Large parcels of land in areas, including Lynwood and Parkwood, were bought up by developers. Migrants were required to pay a deposit on a home to be built for the family's occupation upon arrival. Rosemary Davey's family signed up for sponsorship by RDC and she recalled that the scheme was not all that they had hoped for:

> When we arrived in Perth, we were supposed to be met at the airport: the building company sponsored us—and of course, they never showed! So we got a taxi and he took us to a hotel and we stayed there until Dad could ring them the next morning and find out what happened.

[44] Interview with Anne-Marie Walker [child migrant], arrived 1970, [personal communication], 3 January 2010.
[45] Jordens, p.69.
[46] Peters, p.236.
[47] Interview Bert and Milly Slack.

> And then he did get a hold of the building company and they picked us up from the hotel and took us to the unit where we were staying…But there was a catch: you actually had to buy a house, in Lynwood, to be able to stay in the flat they put you in (which was very nice: in South Perth, overlooking the river)…it turned out that they could have gotten a place a lot cheaper in Applecross than what they paid for the place in Lynwood. I wonder what the Applecross place would be worth now?[48]

Many British families were sponsored by their future Australian employers and housing was often included in the employment package. The father of sisters Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert was sponsored by BHP and the employee package included a job and a house. However, the reality of life in Australia came as a shock to the family:

> Valerie: When Dad signed up to come over here, I think he was under the impression that his wages would be comparable to what he was getting [in England], and that a home would be provided. And yet, we weren't there more than three months when they told us they were selling the units, and we had to get out. It was three weeks before Christmas, four kids…and we're going to be homeless. There were not many private rentals, not in those days.
>
> Karen: They just had to go to State Housing and get Emergency Housing. And for Mum and Dad, that was like going to charity. It was humiliating for them. They'd never expected to be that desperate.
>
> I was in for a shock when we got put into migrant flats. That's when you [finally] met other migrants and you realised that they had stories similar….and some of their stories were worse than ours. We lost our home and got put into accommodation—but some of them didn't have anywhere to go when they first came.[49]

The first follow-up Appleyard survey in 1961 confirmed that many migrants had temporarily moved into inferior accommodation than they had occupied in Britain, usually as a stepping stone towards purchasing their own home. Many participants were critical of the standard of housing in Australia, which they considered worse than houses built in Britain. The isolated location and insufficient public amenities of new outer suburbs were also a sore point, including infrequency of public transport and a lack of footpaths and kerbing. By the second follow-up survey in 1967, 58% of the families still living in Australia owned or were buying their own homes, which was lower than the 70% rate for the general population. There was a

[48] Interview Rosemary Davey.
[49] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert.

clear and obvious correlation between the amount of capital transferred from Britain and the rates of home ownership.[50]

Employment: a top priority

Employment is a central theme of migrant recollections in both generations, due to its impact upon the solidarity of the family unit in terms of lifestyle and living standard. The Ten Pound Poms did not leave Britain in search of employment, in fact, quite the reverse; many left stable jobs behind in order to pursue better opportunities and adventure in Australia. Economic conditions varied, depending upon the year of arrival, gender and qualifications. The extent to which their 'leap of faith' paid off varied considerably, in particular during the early years.

Whilst employment in Australia was generally plentiful throughout the 1960's and 1970's, apart from a few short periods of recession early in both decades, many migrants were unable to find work that matched their British experience and qualifications, forcing them into low-paid and casual employment. Of my group, 61% reported that they, or their parents, experienced difficulty either in obtaining employment or finding work with commensurate pay in Australia. This led to a decline in living standards for these families, making the early years in their new country a constant struggle. Chris Pepper's father had great difficulty finding work in Australia in 1972, which almost caused the family to return:

> Dad had never been unemployed in his life, never been on the dole. Would never go on the dole—didn't believe in it. When he came here, he didn't have a job to come to. He had great difficulty…he would have been 49, almost 50. He was determined he'd get a job: he'd be up at 6am in the morning and going down the paper shop and going through all the ads, ringing up for interviews and stuff like that. He'd [try] to go back to his trade as a Fitter and Turner. He'd be lining up at factories for jobs, things like that. And...he wasn't getting a job. It was humiliating for him.[51]

Unemployment was not necessarily an issue that affected all demographics, however. Free from the responsibilities and financial demands of family, seventeen-year-old Pat McGlone had no difficulty in finding work in Australia in 1960. He found that, unlike many of his adult counterparts, wages and working conditions were fairer and more lucrative than in England:

[50] Appleyard, 1988, p.77.
[51] Interview Chris Pepper.

> When I left England, I was earning £5 a week—about $10. When I got to Australia, my first job in the lemonade factory, I was earning £24 [decimalisation was not until 14 February, 1966] a week! Admittedly, some of that was working overtime…but, amazing! There was never any overtime [pay] in England, you just did it.[52]

The postwar economic boom years in Australia were punctuated by periods of economic recession, with disastrous consequences for those arriving at the wrong time.[53] Jack Bullimore tested rockets for a decade in England but, in Australia, literally walked the streets to find a job, eventually obtaining labouring work on a building site. His wife Eunice noted of the time that 'I think they [the Australian government] needed migrants…but the jobs weren't really there'.[54]

Unprecedented levels of migrant intake caused workplace tensions and anxieties on both sides; unions feared a dilution of the workforce and downward pressure on wages, whilst migrants risked being regarded as expendable and were often subjected to exploitation and discrimination.[55] Vince O'Neil was ten when his family migrated in 1974, but he clearly recalled of their early days:

> There was 'That Pom Thing' (the accent and all that). Because there were so many of us, a lot of the Australians thought, 'They're coming over here, taking our jobs and all that'. They [Australian kids] used to give me a fair bit of shit, but looking back, I can see where they were coming from, as well. When you get a large group of immigrants—from England, or India, or wherever—that group is targeted. It was difficult….but you just get on with it.[56]

Hammerton and Thomson note that most postwar migrants until the early 1970's found some form of employment. Many experienced a diversity of work situations and 'job-hopping' was an accepted behaviour. Rosemary Davey recalled of her father during the late 1960's to early 1970's: 'He had quite a few jobs…he did end up as a building supervisor with one of the companies. He used to flit about a lot—but he never had any problems finding work; there was a bit of a building boom on'.[57]

[52] Interview Patrick McGlone.
[53] Hammerton and Thomson, p.199.
[54] Interview Bullimores.
[55] Richards, p. 230.
[56] Interview Vince O'Neil.
[57] Interview Rosemary Davey.

Mum was ALWAYS tired: Women and children in the workplace

Well into the 1970's, separate spheres for married couples were accepted in both Britain and Australia, with men the breadwinners and women full time mothers and 'homemakers'. Many married women of different class backgrounds regarded working, at least while the children were young, as an unfortunate necessity brought about by the financial pressures of migration and the need to get established immediately.[58] Chris Pepper noted that 'I really don't think that Mum expected to have to work when she came to Australia, until she saw the difficulties that Dad was having getting a job. It was supposed to have been a better lifestyle over here'.[59]

The practice of girls leaving school earlier than boys was typical in Australian society from the 1950's through to the 1970's. Many migrant girls were compelled to start work early due to the family's financial burden.[60] Gail Nock recalled her first job in Australia as a teenager with a shudder:

> I got a job in the Hay Street mall. It was called 'Tom the Cheap'…it was an awful place and I hated every second of it…and it was in the city. It was a long, long walk from where we lived to a bus stop, Dad had a car but took it to work, and Mum didn't drive. So I had to walk—and I was used to walking because we had to walk everywhere—but it was just coming into winter and it rained and was freezing and I'd be drenched by the time I got to the bus stop. Then you had this great long bus trip on an overcrowded bus. And I'd get dropped off a mile from where I worked and had to walk there. It was too much, especially for someone who was only fifteen and hardly used to working.[61]

For many families, making ends meets and then achieving home ownership in a new country meant juggling employment responsibilities around young children. Well into the 1970's, professional childcare was virtually unknown and social attitudes normally opposed working mothers. Most British migrant families lacked extended family to help out and complicated childcare arrangements were fashioned from necessity. This included juggling one or more part-time jobs around school hours, parents alternating night and day shifts, roping in older

[58] Hammerton and Thomson, p.209.
[59] Interview Chris Pepper.
[60] Peters, pp's. 173, 277.
[61] Interview Gail Nock.

children to mind younger siblings, latch door children and relying upon friends and neighbours.

Anne-Marie Walker recalls that both of her parents worked full-time to achieve their goal of providing a better future for their children, of which home ownership was a cornerstone. She recalls the substantial impact this had on her childhood and into the present:

> I think my parents did it pretty tough as my Mum's Mum looked after my brother and I in England. So when they came to Australia there was no one to help her out. For my brother and I, this meant we became latch-key kids. I can still remember where the back door key was in the garage at our rented house in Cheltenham [Victoria]. When I think back, I was Mitchell's [her own son—6 years old] age…and we would walk home from school and let ourselves in to the house. There was an old lady living in a granny flat in our back yard who we could call on for emergencies or, of course, our neighbours.
>
> Our childhood taught my brother and I to be very independent and self-sufficient….but that, in itself, has its own drawbacks. I have terrible trouble asking for help or even accepting it when it's offered as I think I should be able to do everything for myself.[62]

Conversely, the parents of both Jeremy Griffiths and Dave Thomas worked full-time during their childhood in Australia, but neither recalled this being a problem. Jeremy said that 'we were always latch key kids; both Mum and Dad worked. They were, I guess, sporty, energetic people, always doing stuff. Weekends were always picnics with relatives and friends…it was all good.'[63]

Rosemary Davey's mother was a nurse and worked nightshift during the family's early years in Australia so she could look after the children during the day:

> When I look back now, I think it must have been a big challenge for her…She was 36, two kids [aged two and ten], couldn't drive—Mum's never driven—and the public transport wasn't that great. Having to work, she did nightshift, because we were still young. Mum would also often do the Friday and Saturday nights—she was ALWAYS tired! When my little sister was about five or six—school age—Mum swapped to days and would pick up my sister from the neighbours after school.[64]

Shifts in the both domestic and work spheres brought about by migration invariably required a high degree of flexibility from all family members, with both husbands and children taking on increased domestic responsibility. Family relationships within the home shifted, as parents

[62] Interview Anne-Marie Walker.
[63] Interview Jeremy Griffiths and Dave Thomas.
[64] Interview Rosemary Davy.

discarded the class-ridden values of their own parents' generation in favour of practicalities in a new country.

Chapter Five: Settling in

Severed chains: Help and support.

A critical difference between British and other migrant family groups was the lack of extended family in the former, particularly in the early years. Unlike migrants from other countries, who often formed 'migration chains' of extended family and friends, the British usually migrated as a nuclear family unit. This situation could be a 'double-edged sword' for the British; whilst many cherished their independence, others missed the support in times of need or crisis.[1]

The Department of Immigration helped to establish and fund Good Neighbour Councils, aimed at 'converting Australians to the desirability of mass migration and helping newcomers "assimilate" into the Australian way of life.'[2] The Western Australian arm of this initiative was formed in 1950 and was made up of forty-one organisations, including several churches. Hammerton and Thomson note the 'relative indifference' to such organisations by British migrants, who found them a poor substitute for the rich British 'pub culture'.[3] Many British migrant associations were short-lived compared with the extensive network of social organizations maintained by other ethnic groups, such as the Greeks and Italians. Indeed, none of my participants could recall participating in British social clubs or organisations. Pat McGlone experienced Australia in 1960 with great enthusiasm as a seventeen-year-old, but Pat and his friends did find it difficult to socialise with locals of their age group. He partly attributed the high return rate he observed amongst the 'Little Brothers' to the lack of British social organisations:

> You know when the Italians came out here? They all speak Italian to each other, they go to their Italian Club…the Poles, the Germans do the same…we [the British] had no clubs…Supposedly [because] we spoke the language, we were just expected to assimilate in with the Australians. But we *were* different. We did find socialising difficult…as soon as they knew you were English, there was a little bit of….I won't say unfriendliness; that would probably put too strong a slant on it. But it was there. It wasn't that easy to make friends [as a young man]. I think…had you come here as a school child, growing up in school—that's one thing. But…coming as 17 to 19-year-olds and just being expected to pick up the Australian way of life…it wasn't easy.[4]

[1] Hammerton and Thomson, p.296.
[2] Peters, p.13.
[3] Hammerton and Thomson, p.335.
[4] Interview Patrick McGlone.

Newly arrived Britons often found out that, other than 'a version of a common language', they had little in common with the Australians or their culture.[5] The majority of my group initially forged social and business networks with compatriots, and then, eventually, the locals themselves. Many British migrants found solidarity and comfort amongst fellow Britons, who became a substitute of sorts for the extended families and friends left behind.

Leaving the pub culture behind: Social, cultural and class challenges.

For new migrants, mixing with Australians involved learning a whole new set of customs and codes of behaviour. Eunice Bullimore favourably compared the relaxed style of Australian entertaining with British social customs:

> When you go to a barbeque...how many times have you heard that old chestnut about bringing a plate?! With the Aussies…it's like, take me as I am, even if it's only bread and Vegemite. In England, it's quite different: it's like, you come to tea on a Sunday and you have to have ham, tea and salad, all laid on. The best china gets laid out and it's not impromptu. The Aussie way takes some getting used to and some people…won't.[6]

Denice Fouweather found that adjusting to the larrikin humour of many Australian men was a bit of a challenge. She recalled the following incident from her family's early years in Northam during the 1970's:

> Denice: I'm stood at 'bar [Northam Hotel] and who should we spot but this Tommy Law: he were a workmate of Harry's. And I'm just waiting for Harry to fetch me my drink when Tommy comes over and *there's something pink hanging out of the front of his trousers!* God alive, I didn't know where to look. I says, 'Oooh Harry, look!'
>
> Harry: Well, he'd just bought a chicken to take home for dinner and he had 'neck of it hanging out of his trousers…[7]

The older generation, in particular, clung to their own longstanding traditions based upon culture and class because they regarded them as superior to Australia's, which is a younger country.[8] Whilst many believed that the perceived 'classless society' of Australia was a positive aspect that would ensure their acceptance, others upheld their ingrained class-based beliefs. Some of my child migrant participants acknowledged the inflexible attitude of their

[5] Peters, p.228.
[6] Interview Jack, Eunice and Mark Bullimore.
[7] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.
[8] Johnston, 1979, p.44.

parents, which they felt hindered their adjustment into Australian society. One dubbed it 'The British Condition'.[9] Anne-Marie Walker recalled the complex mix of cultural disorientation and determination to succeed that hindered her parents' integration into Australian society: 'They both still strive to have the best of everything and are both strangely worried about appearances. I suppose it was their upbringing; I can always remember being told, "You can't do that, it's *common*", or "You can't do this, it's *common*" '.[10]

Chris Pepper was dismayed that his parents' ingrained beliefs impeded them socially:

> I think that they didn't make friends easily, either; they're not gregarious, extrovert kind of people. Obviously, all of the rellies they left behind…they were the kind of people [that] it took them a long time to get to know people, to get a friendship going. And I hate to say it; I mean, I love my parents dearly, but Mum…was a little bit of a snob… That was quite negative, and unfortunately prevented them from making a lot of friends here.[11]

British migrants were generally impressed with the egalitarian nature of Australian society in the 1950s and 1960s. Roger Dallas was born in 'the real cockney territory' of Eastham, and noted that, 'when you look at the cockney language, it's actually very similar to the Australian slang. And the [Australian] upbringing is very similar—no BS [Bulls**t]!'[12]

However, the ingrained superiority of men in society was a sticking point for many. By the early 1970s, women did not receive equal pay for the same work, could not take out a bank loan and were expected to resign from their employment when pregnant. Socially, 'men's-only' bars endorsed the 'beer-drinking macho culture' of the period and gender segregation at Australian parties and barbeques annoyed many.[13] Working class Britons from the industrial north were used to the extensive 'pub culture', which usually included both men and women. Conversely, some perceived British social culture as a stifling and negative influence from which they hoped migration would provide an escape. My mother recalled that her sister was inspired by their emigration experience and tried desperately, yet unsuccessfully, to convince her husband to emigrate:

[9] Interview Rosemary Davey.
[10] Interview Anne-Marie Walker.
[11] Interview Chris Pepper.
[12] Interview Roger Dallas.
[13] Hammerton and Thomson, p.140.

> I think that Jean [sister] would have [emigrated], but John wouldn't. Jean came over to visit a few times and loved it. But John didn't want to leave his…boozy mates. His weekends consisted of going to the Club on a Friday night after work, going home, having a sleep, working Saturday morning, and then going back to the Club on Saturday afternoon. John's life was just between work and the Club, basically. That was it; that was the life of your typical British man.[14]

Conversely, recent studies have explored the ways in which post-war migrant parents adapted to the challenges of their new lives by rejecting old models of parenting and traditional gender roles. Men generally retained the role of breadwinner, yet also routinely assumed traditional domestic tasks. Many working-class men prided themselves on being closer to their children than their own fathers had been by spending more time with them. Into the Sixties and Seventies, family and domestic relationships were 'changing in subtle but significant ways'.[15]

Sleeping on the lino: climate, flora and fauna.

Australia's climate and open space was a critical factor in the migration decision, but these factors also became part of the adjustment process. Many British migrants struggled to get used to the heat, which ironically kept them indoors to a greater extent than back home. Additionally, fears of local insects and wildlife evoke vivid memories of the early days in Australia.[16] One child migrant's mother was born and spent her childhood in Australia but moved to England as a young woman, before later re-emigrating to Australia with her English family. She witnessed a different side to their mother:

> When we moved into our rental, which was an old-style home, it had…scorpions! In the *toilet*. I'd never lived in an environment where things could *hurt* you. And my mother did a couple of things that just outraged me: she took us into the garden to show us this blue-tongued lizard. And we just…well, you didn't *have* creepy crawlies [in England], really. And this blue-tongued lizard….well, these were things of her childhood. So, we were looking at this *thing, this reptile* in the garden: we were horrified.
>
> And, also, my mother got an orange and she peeled it; a piece off the top, like a 20c piece…and she just sucked the juice out. I can remember thinking, How uncouth! I mean, I probably wouldn't have known the word 'uncouth' then, but that was how I

[14] Interview Glennis Dewsnap.
[15] Hammerton and Thomson, p.234.
[16] Hammerton and Thomson, , p.134.

> was feeling— shock, seeing her behave like that. I saw a different side to my mother; we had come to this place of…heathens, really.[17]

Jeremy Griffiths vividly recalls his first encounter with an Australian magpie at just five years old:

> The main thing I can remember of Graylands [hostel], where I was—it's probably scarred me—was going down to the playground and being swooped by a magpie! I can remember running back, [screaming] *Waaaagh!* And Mum comes running in a panic…it was like a vulture or something, this bird attacking me.[18]

Alan Fouweather was fascinated by the sheer size and ferocity of Australian soldier ants and asked his mother if he could put one in a matchbox and post it home, because his British friends would never believe him otherwise:

> One-inch soldier ants: I've never seen anything that big, apart from in a book. I got bitten a few times; it burned like fire, for ages. In England the ants are like little sugar ants. These ones were an inch-and-a-quarter long with pincers that could take a piece out of you. You gotta be careful where you walk, here: you spot one, you know there's ten more around.

Chris Pepper recalls that his parents could not cope with the Australian heat, which hampered their adjustment to the new country:

> They didn't like Australia…it was the heat. The ironic thing was that Mum was looking forward to the weather; she was a bit of a 'cold fish' and used to suffer in the cold, in England. I distinctly remember her making the statement that she was looking forward to a warm climate…but it was just *too* warm! So that was a big factor.

Karen and Valerie recalled their first summer in the house their parents bought in Gosnells. As they pointed out, modern conveniences such as air-conditioning and ceiling fans were far from the norm during the early 1970's, which made coping with the heat even harder for new migrants unused to such conditions:

> Valerie: We never had air conditioning…there wasn't even ceiling fans [back then]. It was a weatherboard house…fortunately, we had high ceilings. It wouldn't have been as hot as a brick and tile [house].
>
> Karen: It was a very old house—we had the sash windows. And you could keep them open in those days, without the fear of someone coming in. I remember we had flyscreens on *some* of the windows. The mozzies used to drive you crazy! [They] used

[17]Interview with child migrant, [name withheld].
[18] Interview Jeremy Griffiths and Dave Thomas.

> to bite you…we weren't used to them. And…we just slept on the lino [to keep cool].[19]

For others, the essential strangeness of the Australian landscape was a source of fascination; notably, the endless blue skies, bright stars at night and clean beaches. As Jupp observed, 'The English live in a congested environment in a climate which encourages indoor life. Australians do not.'[20] The two countries shared similar cultural beliefs and the same language, but they were not the same. British migrants varied considerably in their initial attitudes to the 'great outdoors' of Australia, which for some was 'alien and hostile' and, for others, 'a place of adventure and transformation.'[21] The great majority of my child migrant participants fell into the latter category; unfortunately, the same did not apply to all of their parents.

'Bewdy, Dad!' Australianising the children.

The 1967 Appleyard follow-up survey confirmed that the majority of British settlers had been vindicated by their decision to migrate for the sake of their children. After almost seven years in Australia, 42% of married men and 44% of their wives were satisfied with their migration decision. Many stated that, whilst they missed Britain, their children were happier in Australia and a brighter future for them was the main reason for staying. Younger children were becoming Australian in speech, outlook, interests and appearance, whilst older children were beginning to marry into Australian families.[22]

However, evidence indicates that many of the children also experienced difficulty in adapting to Australian society, just like many of their parents. The children who settled in the easiest were those who quickly gave up their obvious British traits (notably accent and dress) and adopted Australian ways. Other studies of the period indicated that identification with Australia increased in the second generation of migrants.[23] Peters counters these findings, observing that the reality was very different for many of the migrant children who grew up in Western Australia during the 1950's and 1960's. Whilst 'the ideology of assimilation dominated immigration policy' these children often 'experienced many more difficulties in

[19] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert.
[20] Jupp, 2004, p.181.
[21] Hammerton and Thomson, p.135.
[22] Appleyard, 1988, p.89.
[23] Alan Richardson, The Assimilation and Adjustment of Immigrants. Ruth Johnston (Ed.), *Immigrants in Western Australia,* University of Western Australia Press, 1979, p. 12.

settling in to the "Australian way of life" than both the authorities and their parents appreciated. Despite enthusiastic usage of the official term "New Australian", the fundamental reality remained that migrants—and their children—were thought of as "reffos, wogs, spags, kikes, Yids, and Poms!" '[24]

Johnston's study of 1968-69 indicated that the majority of British parents did not like the way in which Australians spoke English and preferred that their children did not speak that way.[25] Claire Bishop migrated in 1966 and recalled of her British father: 'I don't think that Dad was ever happy here—we [the children] weren't allowed to speak with an Australian accent, or use colloquialisms like "Bewdy" [*beauty*-contraction of 'beautiful': an exclamation of approval]. My brothers loved that: "Bewdy!" And they used to go, "Bewdy, Dad!" And run!'[26] Johnston concluded that the parents' level of assimilation could be gauged by their overall attitudes to the assimilation of their children; those who actively encouraged their children to live like Australians were more strongly assimilated themselves.[27]

British migrant children had a huge advantage over their European counterparts because they spoke English, but many were mercilessly teased over their strange terminology and accents. Often to the disapproval of their parents, British migrant children had to adopt different pronunciations, speech rhythms and slang so as to fit in with their Australian peers. As with many migrant children from non-English speaking countries, some British children found it easier to speak 'Australian English' outside of the home and 'British English' to their parents and relatives.[28] Melonie Millar recalled that learning the Australian accent was a top priority and a source of solidarity for herself and her siblings, in the face of parental disapproval:

> As a child, the four of us…spent an enormous amount of time together. Every single day, talking to Australian kids, learning how to say words. So, a week after arrival, we could all say the word 'mate': M-A-T-E. *Maay-tuh!* Although when we were talking to us Mam [speaks unintelligible, fast Scottish brogue to demonstrate] it was…Verra verra Scottish! We were multilingual (laughs)! All languages and dialects are based upon…how you say the vowels. So we worked and worked and worked, the four of us, on the vowels, until we could do it. I would suggest that, after only a few months, the four of us had a very strong Australian accent. We could do it.[29]

[24] Peters, p. 265.
[25] Johnston, p, 66.
[26] Interview Claire Bishop.
[27] Johnston, p,50.
[28] Johnston, p.69
[29] Interview Melonie Millar.

One child migrant recalled that her father frowned upon his children using 'Australianisms', but did not actively prevent them from adopting the local dialect. Nor does she remember being bullied about her English accent. She recounted 'feeling more enamoured of the Australian accent, things like, "You lucky duck" and "You lucky do-er". But I can't remember ever being teased that badly; it wasn't an issue for me.'[30]

Australian schools: inside-out and reversed.

Chris Pepper migrated to Australia in 1972 when he was fifteen. He observed of Australian schools:

> I thought they were inside-out. It's all to do with the climate. At Armadale High School, you'd have a wing of classrooms and the door would open onto a verandah…outdoors. Schools in England, they're indoors, so you go inside a building, through a corridor with the entrances to the classrooms inside. So…everything was reversed, was outside...I found that fascinating.[31]

The notion of local schools being 'inside out' is an effective metaphor for the introduction to Australian school life for many British children during this era. Migrant children often struggled to adapt to and learn local youth culture and dress standards, together with dealing with the frequent curriculum and term date mismatches between the two countries. Often the child, and not the upheaval they had been through, was blamed for problems encountered. To make matters worse, parents were often embroiled in their own settlement problems and working to make ends meet, rendering them less available for their children than they had been in England.

British mothers were invariably unaware of the differences in Australian schools, notably, the wearing of a uniform and the children's' custom throughout the 1960's and 1970's of not wearing shoes.[32] Karen Gardner recalled that her mother's well-intentioned, yet inflexible, British standards did little to help her to settle into Australian school life:

> I can remember one day that I fell over on the way to school and my arm was bleeding and I had a jumper on—we had to wear them; everyone else was in short sleeves. I sat there all day and it all stuck to my sleeve. And the teacher says, 'What are you doing with a jumper on—take it off!' And it was all stuck to my elbow—it was really painful, and there was no first aid kit.[33]

[30] Interview with child migrant, [name withheld].
[31] Interview Chris Pepper.
[32] Peters, pp's 261, 269, 271, 272.
[33] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert.

Some were able to shrug off their own disciplined upbringings and adopt a more relaxed approach to parenting. Ingrained British customs were relaxed, including dress standards that tended to be incompatible with the Australian climate and local fashions. Many migrant children recall the freedom to 'run wild' in the warmer climate, open spaces and more laid back attitudes of Australia. For Dave Thomas, these aspects of Australia framed his earliest memories:

> Near the 'Concentration Camp' [Noalimba Reception Centre] was a school—must have been Bull Creek Primary—and we used to have to walk there. And I remember coming home the first day and Mum just blasted me, because my feet were black. I would have gone in bare feet or thongs, probably. Everyone had bare feet in those days…and that was my very first memory of Australia: getting black feet on the first day of school. Even going to school barefoot was a novelty…you couldn't in England, you'd get frostbite![34]

One child migrant fondly recalled her confusion upon starting school in Australia:

> I can remember going for our interviews at the primary school, and my father asking about buses and things. And the headmaster said to my father, 'Oh yes, they catch the "Empty Tea" buses. And...I had visions of us sitting on boxes of tea, empty tea chests or something like that. But of course, what he meant was, M-T-T [Metropolitan Transport Trust].[35]

Many British migrant schoolchildren found that their initial adjustment to Australia was equally as challenging for them as it was for their parents, if not more so. Many of the older children, in particular, missed the social support provided by their network of friends back home. Some Australian children appropriated the prejudices of their parents and 'Pommy bashing' was a common pastime in the playground. Amongst my group, most of the school-aged children initially suffered bullying to some degree, which for many of the boys resulted in outright physical confrontation. Roger Dallas arrived in Perth in 1965 as a thirteen-year-old and found that his accent and appearance made him visible and therefore a target for bullies at school:

> It wasn't easy; you were called A Pommy Bastard. Oh, God, yeah—I fought my way out of school just about every night. I had my bike tyres slashed; the bikes in those days used to be like the Cow Horn bikes, with the back pedals…*Malvern Stars*. And I'd have a hand-made racing bike, which was a *Leach Marathon* I'd brought over

[34] Interview Jeremy Griffiths and David Thomas.
[35] Interview with child migrant, [name withheld].

> from London, and no one had ever seen one of those before, with the thin tyres. They didn't like that…it got thrown in the swamp, tyres slashed.[36]

The importance of the school years is fundamental to character formation, self-esteem and growing up, and the potential disruption caused by a move to a new country is formidable. British children who travelled by sea usually lost several months of schooling in the move to Australia. Australian term dates and curricula were very different from those in Britain, resulting in British children being either put up or down a year and invariably bored or confused as a result. Valerie Joubert made this point effectively:

> Going to school in Safety Bay was the big issue, because I was going from a second year high school, down to a primary school—Year Seven. The English school system goes from September to September, so I'd just started second year at the high school. Whereas here, they didn't start school—the starting school-age was six instead of five in Australia—for another twelve to eighteen months. So I was effectively put down two years.[37]

Conversely, Chris Pepper was struggling in an advanced stream in England and found that the move to Australia actually benefitted his education:

> Mum was *devastated* that I went into third year, because I was in fourth year in England, wasn't I? They held me back a year! But…they start school a year earlier in England, that was why. Third year really was a repeat year, because I knew a lot of the subject matter already. I probably did quite well in third year…academically, just not socially.[38]

There are also frequent reports from British migrant children of unsympathetic teachers during this period, some of whom actively endorsed the prejudices and social norms of the time.[39] Karen Gardner vividly recalled the apparent hostility and indifference of both her teacher and peers at her first Australian school in 1971:

> My Year 3 teacher…she insulted you every chance she got, which would not be allowed in this day and age. I can remember the first time I went into the classroom…it must have been the very first day and I was a shy child…I had been stood at the front of the class [getting introduced], and the teacher told me to go and sit next to this girl, and she just turned around and said, 'I don't sit next to migrants…My Dad told me I'm not to sit next to them.'

[36] Interview Roger Dallas.
[37] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert.
[38] Interview Chris Pepper.
[39] Peters, p.267.

> And I didn't realise until that time that I was something other than what I am. I didn't realise that I had a label, and I thought, 'Oh she's not to going to be very nice to me!' And the teacher didn't even reprimand her. She just said, 'Oh, you'd better go and sit next to Erin, then' (who was my friend for a while).[40]

Public education in Australia was free until high school, as it was in Britain. However, unlike the British school system, the cost of school administration fees, lunches, stationary and textbooks had to be met by the families. Only 47% of British migrant parents during the early Sixties were aware of this.[41] Valerie Joubert recalled struggling with this difference in 1970 when she turned up unprepared on her first day at an Australian school, noting 'I can remember that teacher saying [sarcastically], 'Well what do they write with in England then—computers?'

The combined introduction of the metric system in February 1966 and getting used to Australian currency caused difficulties for many new migrants. Some children had been prepared by way of activity sheets issued by Australia House or completed during the sea crossing, but not all were as fortunate. Karen Gardner recalled during a maths lesson: 'I hadn't even figured out the money yet, I was still thinking in twelves—pounds, shillings and pence. I wasn't used to the decimal system yet….so I got [from the teacher], 'Oh, you can't add up? You're in Year Three and you can't add up yet?' [42]

Dave Thomas was seven years old when he started school in Australia in 1971. He did not recall a problem with his accent, as many of his peers were also British migrant children, but he struggled with dyslexia. He found the Australian school system in 1971 to be lagging well behind Britain in managing children with the condition:

> You see, I'm dyslexic. And in England, I was in a special programme for that...but over here, it wasn't recognised [as a condition]. So I was just chucked in mainstream and I couldn't read or write anything at a normal, legible level. It didn't get much better until Grade Five or Six, so I went years—three or four years when I really struggled. I used to write backwards; so instead of writing from left to right, I used to write from right to left. In England, they were correcting it, but over here they didn't recognise it and they just let me go.[43]

Many British migrant children, in particular the older ones, were disillusioned and traumatised and left school as soon as possible. Some of these children believed that

[40] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert
[41] Appleyard, p.205.
[42] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert.
[43] Interview Jeremy Griffiths and Dave Thomas.

migration had ruined their education.[44] Roger Dallas was eventually worn down by years of suffering 'pommy bashing' at school and left school early, despite a promising academic record:

> In the end, I'd had enough. I was doing well, scholar-wise—I was supposed to go to uni. But I'd had enough of all the rubbish [bullying]. So I thought, I'll just go out and get a job…The headmaster came to see my parents to try and get me to go back to school again, to get me through to uni…but I told him I'd had enough.[45]

Studies of the period indicated that younger children adjusted to life in Australia more easily than older children and teenagers, many of the latter whom reacted to peer requirements with understandable resentment.[46] Mark Bullimore was six years old when his family migrated in 1969 and recalls a seamless adjustment: 'I don't honestly recall being treated any differently because I was a Pom. Whether it was the school [itself], as there were a lot of kids from Noalimba and we all went together? It wasn't an issue at all…I just slotted in. Just the normal ratbag kid, getting up to all sorts of mischief'.[47]

Sport helped many migrant children to fit in and was a great socialiser for those fortunate enough to be athletic. Culturally, Australian children (as well as their parents) tend to value sporting prowess above academic achievement. Rosemary Davey migrated in 1966, when she was ten. She had been unhappy at school in England but fitted into her new Australian school easily, where her sporting ability was a great advantage:

> I didn't have a good time in England—I was bullied quite badly and had a terrible time with teachers. I loved sport, which was not a terribly English focus. I came here and the school I went to was Canningvale. There were only 90 kids in the whole school…a very sporty school. I loved it…I fitted in right away.[48]

Most of my school-age participants eventually adjusted and adapted to the Australian school-yard. Chris Pepper was bullied about his English accent during his early school years in Australia but fortunately overcame these earlier challenges by the time he reached upper school:

> But then…fourth and fifth year were fantastic. I found me groove; found some good friends. I suppose I met a few towards the end of third year and they carried over into fourth year…It's endured all these years and we've still kept in touch and still see

[44] Hammerton and Thomson, p.150.
[45] Interview Roger Dallas.
[46] Johnston, p.64.
[47] Interview Bullimores.
[48] Interview Rosemary Davey.

> each other regularly. They're Australians…both Australian girls. I suppose by third and fourth year, it was all done and dusted [the Pom thing]; I don't remember any bullying—I remember enjoying upper school.[49]

Fitting in to the Australian schoolyard was rarely a straightforward process for the British migrant children, and the experience varied greatly for each individual. Some resisted peer and societal pressure to fit in and 'become Australian', which for others was like 'discovering' themselves. The diversity of experiences reported by my group supports elements of both sides; that adjustment to a new school system was almost always the biggest challenge for these migrant children and that it was not often accomplished without some level of difficulty.

[49] Interview Chris Pepper.

Chapter Six: Loyalties and choices

Between two worlds: the migrant child's journey.

Peters spoke to migrant children who talked of having a 'dual life' and of not belonging 'there or here'. Several of my child-migrant participants found that this sense of dual identity was reinforced upon returning to England. Vince O'Neil returned with his family to England after three years in Australia, because his mother could not settle down. As a thirteen-year-old, he recalled a stark sense of displacement upon returning, which was compounded by his parents' diverging opinions about migration: 'In fact, we copped that [sort of thing] when we got back to England—kangaroos and all that! That was a shock…it was a transient two years as the Old Man had no intention of staying in England. So we were marking time…with no place to call home'.[50]

Younger children with little or no memory of Britain may also have experienced difficulty in locating a national identity for themselves. These 'migrant babies' have had to 'draw upon a second-hand English identity and culture to help make sense of Australia'.[51] Many were identified by Australians in terms of their 'Pommy' status, resulting in a level of alienation from their adopted country. These children may be unable to identify with either country, resulting in feelings of confusion and ambivalence that can extend into adulthood. I was not quite two years old when I migrated with my family to Australia in 1969 and have no memory of England. Growing up in Australia, I readily accepted my British origins through interaction with my own family and the knowledge that I was born there. I remember well the confusion I felt upon meeting my extended family during a holiday to England in 1977, when I was referred to as a 'bloody Aussie' and repeatedly told to 'speak the Queen's English' by my British relatives.

Johnston's 1971 survey of Australian family attitudes to migrants found that the young people already in the workplace preferred that migrants forget their cultural background and adopt the Australian way of life as soon as possible. The young working girls were reluctant to go out with immigrants of their own age, preferring the company of Australian friends.[52]

[50] Interview Vince O'Neil.
[51] Hammerton and Thomson, p.161.
[52] Johnston, p.46.

Pat McGlone socialised with his fellow 'Little Brothers' as an eighteen-year-old living in Sydney in 1960 and found that acceptance by their young Australian peers was a challenge:

> I suppose meeting girls was one of the hardest things. We'd go to dances, same as [the local lads] on a Saturday night…but we did find it difficult…typically, the girls at the dances would be socialising and talking to the boys they went to school with, and had known for a long time. We were always strangers, forever on the outside, really. This was probably in the first few years. Later on when we adapted—learned Australian accents and started talking like [the locals], they don't pick it up quite so easily.[53]

For older children and teenagers, Australia's youth scene of the 1960s seemed rather old-fashioned after London's vibrant youth culture of the 'Swinging Sixties'. Hammerton notes that, well into the 1960's, younger British migrants exposed to contemporary youth culture in London and the larger towns were often dismayed at the lack of sophistication they encountered in Australia.[54] Roger Dallas arrived in Perth in 1965 with his family when he was thirteen. Accustomed to contemporary London, Roger found Australia 'a bit of a culture shock':

> Being a young teenager, I was used to seeing bands like The Stones, The Beatles and The Who—stuff like that— in London…I got off the boat pretty well much dressed up, in Oxford Bags and Ben Sherman shirt…and you get over here, you dress like that— and the local guys at the school think you're a poofter. Because the national [Australian] dress in those days was blue jeans, white shirt and a black belt, or blue jeans, a yellow shirt…and a white belt! Don't ask me why, but that was the dress.[55]

Johnston's research indicated that 'full' assimilation by second-generation migrants was a long and complicated process that was not achieved during this second generation for the great majority of child migrants, although many made a satisfactory adjustment**.** Studies of the period found that the best possible outcome was a 'mixed' assimilation, whereby children managed to adopt and retain elements from both their ethnic and Australian cultures.[56]

[53] Interview Patrick McGlone.
[54] Hammerton, A. James. "Growing up in 'white bread' England in the sixties I might as well have come from mars': cosmopolitanism and the city in the lives of British migrants in the late twentieth century." *History Australia* 7.2 (2010): 32.1.
[55] Interview Roger Dallas
[56] Johnston, pp.46-50

Living without extended family: One-minute phone calls and soggy cereals.

Many British migrants noted that the removal of the extended family network 'cemented' their nuclear family unit, through being forced to rely upon each other.[57] Some families found that migration made possible a break from claustrophobic family ties back home. Yet for others, migration tore irreparable holes in the fabric of close-knit and interdependent extended families. It is not surprising that homesickness was a major contributing factor for the worrying numbers of returnees evident during the Sixties and Seventies. For the child migrants, their parents' decision to migrate saw many of them grow up without extended family, an unknown circumstance for previous generations.

The Appleyard survey found that personal responsibilities and commitments, notably to extended family, kept many families at the 'immigration threshold' for many years before finally deciding to cross it. The wife's attachment to her parents, and the grandparents' grief at 'losing' their grandchildren, were cited as the main deterrents. Karen Gardner recalled her Nan's desperation and grief at the family's migration, offering to help buy them a home if they would only return to England:

> Nan was going to help us buy a house [in England, to move back to]. And she burnt some of her money on the fire when Mum said no. She was one very disappointed lady. She only had Mum, and when her husband passed away…she had brothers and sisters still living at the time, but Mum was her only child. She was [left] virtually on her own. And she thought, in desperation, if I offer to help them buy a house, they might come back? But...they [my parents] weren't having any of it.
>
> Nan never came out to Australia for a visit.[58]

Feelings of guilt were suffered by migrant parents over depriving grandparents of a relationship with themselves and their grandchildren, which also left them bereft of family support. [59] Eunice Bullimore spent seven years on the 'immigration threshold' because of her parents, finally migrating in 1969 in order to give their own children a better life. She and her husband Jack then endured feelings of guilt throughout their early years in Australia:

> Jack wanted to come before we got married, but I didn't want to leave Mum and Dad at the time. We'd been married for about seven years, we had the children…and we just weren't getting anywhere. One day, I just said to Jack, 'If you still want to go to Australia, we'll go.'

[57] Peters, p.245.
[58] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert.
[59] Peters, p. 246.

> It was quite a shock to our parents. It was a hard decision; we did it for us, but we did it for [the children] more**.** It was almost like a dream…like something we had always been meant to do. But [Dad's] face...I'll never forget it. He was losing his grandchildren, wasn't he? That was the one thing that we really felt guilty about. Our children grew up without their grandparents; that was unfair, that was our fault. But….we don't regret it. They wouldn't have done, either.[60]

Elderly grandparents felt grief and pain at losing children and grandchildren to the other side of the world, for they worried not only about the future of their children and grandchildren in Australia, but also their own with no one to care for them in their old age. Conversely, their migrant sons and daughters juggled feelings of guilt against the opportunities for their own children that life in Australia promised.[61] Jean and John Richardson migrated in 1969 with their three young children. Today, they enjoy a close and rewarding relationship with their children and grandchildren. The Richardsons now look back upon their migration decision with a firm sense of achievement, yet wonder at the enormity of their actions upon the extended family left behind. Jean noted:

> Looking back now, at the age I am, and seeing my three all grown up, I often wonder, How did we leave my Grandmother?... And I often think, If my kids did that to me now, I don't know what I'd do. How did we do it? But…when I look at my kids, they're all settled, and happy, and I think, We did the right thing.[62]

Many grandparents came out to Australia, either to settle permanently or visit as often as possible. Mark Bullimore was six when his family emigrated in 1969 and grew up without extended family in Australia. His maternal grandmother visited some years later and the bemusement she invoked in her grandchildren underlines the cultural differences between the two countries:

> My only recollection of my grandparents, apart from the time I went back when I was twenty, was…Weetbix, and Cornflakes, with hot milk. My Dad had gone off to work and Gran had made breakfast…and there's no Snap, Crackle and Pop, hot milk just doesn't do it. We're like, Oh-kay, that's different![63]

Some extended family members migrated to Australia themselves, encouraged by the success of earlier family migrants or to reunite family members. Chris Pepper migrated with his parents in 1972, a decision made at the request of his homesick sister:

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[60] Interview Bullimores.
[61] Hammerton and Thomson, p. 81.
[62] Interview Jean and John Richardson.
[63] Interview Bullimores.

> My sister migrated in 1969 when she was twenty; she got married young… They would have made a few friends, I suppose, but it wasn't a very pleasant time for her. She was very homesick. We used to correspond with cassette tapes, and letters. In one particular tape, she more or less gave Mum and Dad an ultimatum, for want of a better word, saying that if we didn't come out to Australia, then she was seriously considering going back to the UK, because she was so homesick and couldn't settle here.

Farewelling his own paternal grandparents was the 'biggest wrench' in leaving England for Chris, who remembered: 'I thought they were fantastic people. My grandad would always play with me; play games, spend time with me, *talk* to me. That was so precious to me; it was a big wrench to leave them'.[64]

A lifelong connection with extended family and friends back home was maintained via letters and parcels containing pre-recorded cassette tapes, children's drawings, souvenirs from the home country and photographs. During the pre-technology era, telephone calls were an expensive luxury usually reserved for special occasions such as Christmas and birthdays. My mother recalled:

> We used to ring them [English relatives]…initially, you had to book a phone call to England for Christmas three to four months in advance, just to make sure you could get through—incredible. And it was quite expensive, so we'd sit you three kids around the phone and pass it around; your Dad would time you (one minute each).[65]

In time, these small family units that left networks of relatives behind developed into their own extended family in their new country. Many of my participants readily acknowledged the close relationships they today enjoy with their own children and grandchildren. This has, in turn, initiated retrospective thoughts about the original migration decision. Vince O'Neil noted that he grew up in Australia quite oblivious to the concept of an extended family network, which today he would not wish to be without:

> Nowadays…I've got a brother and a sister over here and they've gotten married and had kids, so we're getting that family group together. My kids have cousins, aunties, uncles—and when they get married, there'll be grandkids too! We are getting our own big [extended] family. But…there was a void there, for our generation. If we emigrated today…it would be a nightmare, not having that extended family that we have now.[66]

[64] Interview Chris Pepper.
[65] Interview Glennis Dewsnap.
[66] Interview Vince O'Neil

Not all nuclear family units were able to adapt to the isolation of their new country and its lifestyle, for as Hammerton and Thomson note, 'migration could foster sharp changes in marital dynamics'.[67] Sixteen per cent of my child participants experienced the breakdown of their parents' marriages during their early years in Australia. The subsequent struggles of each of their mothers as a single parent in a new country have left lasting impressions upon them. As adults, all agree that their parents had probably brought their marital problems with them, 'along with their suitcases and tea chests'. Family solidarity was frequently cited as a vital factor required in order to make the successful transition from one country to another.

The light that I love: visiting 'home'.

Peter Black wrote that many of his expatriate countrymen 'do not know how much they have altered until they return to Britain for a holiday'.[68] The first visit 'home' often took many years to achieve, due to the cost involved. Many were welcomed back to a party atmosphere, others did not want to return to Australia and still others experienced a form of 'counter-culture shock' as they realised that the culture and traditions they had carefully preserved in Australia no longer existed back home.[69] For child migrants returning in later years, this sense of startled realisation can be magnified as childhood haunts are viewed from an adult perspective. Chris Pepper returned for an extended holiday in England and Europe in 1983, eleven years after migrating at fifteen. He remembers the trip as one of the best years of his life, yet also found it a bittersweet experience on many levels:

> I was so excited about going back to the town I was brought up in…to see all of my childhood haunts, through adult eyes. I knew a lot of the shopkeepers, and I just wanted to call in and say hello, see if they were still there: 'Do you remember me?' [laughs] And, some of them still did! I was just…in awe of being back there.
>
> But…not that I expected people to faun over me, but…they didn't seem interested in Australia. There were no questions about Australia; what I was doing, what was it like, or anything like that. It was still all about them, in their closeted environment of where they were. I don't know whether it's this, traitor mentality…you know, you left England, left us all behind, that sort of thing.[70]

For many, returning home was about vindicating the decision to migrate in the first place. My father-in-law Harry happily accompanied his wife Denice on regular trips to England

[67]Hammerton and Thomson, p.234.
[68] Lack and Templeton, p.127.
[69] Peters, p. 280.
[70] Interview Chris Pepper.

every few years but he always returned earlier than she. Harry enjoyed meeting up with family and friends back home, but he was always glad to return to Australia. He often despaired of the 'British way of doing things' which he found to be constricting and monotonous. He once commented: 'Fifteen years after I left that [local] pub, I went back in. The same people were sitting on the same seats'. For Denice, regular visits to England were both a holiday and a way of reconciling the two worlds:

> I don't regret what we've done [migrating to Australia]; I just miss England, that's all. [To me] it's still the same, because I go and see my friends that I went to school with and me sister. It's like I never left when I see them all…and I see folk I haven't seen for years. I enjoyed my trips back to England…it's like going home, and not just a holiday. [71]

British relatives and friends often visited Australia in a reciprocal process that saw them benefit from a holiday in the sun as well as reuniting with sorely missed family living overseas. My maternal Nana was, for my two siblings and me, our constant, tangible link with our barely remembered home country. She would have migrated also, if not for her husband (my mother's stepfather), who was nervous about travelling and did not want to leave his familiar surroundings. Instead, Nana travelled by herself to Australia for extended visits on a bi-annual basis and always arrived bearing wonderful presents for her excited grandchildren. Our devotion to our Nana often prompted my mother to grumble good-naturedly, 'She was never that nice when she was my mother!'

Many migrants who arrived in Australia as young children retained few memories of their country of birth. Often, they returned to Britain in later years, in an attempt to retrace their origins and meet extended family, in the hope of locating a sense of 'self'. As Hammerton and Thomson note 'paradoxically, a child with the least experience and memory of England could have the greatest difficulty in fashioning an identity for [themselves] in Australia'. [72] Michelle Beor was just ten months old and an only child when her parents migrated in 1966. Her parents' divorce at a young age exacerbated her sense of loss at growing up without extended family: 'I did…ask a lot of questions about family when I was growing up because I didn't have brothers and sisters, or extended family over here'. Michelle's mother lost contact with her English family until a return trip in 1982, when she located her brother. A decade later, her paternal aunt located their Australian family whilst searching for her own brother.

[71] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.
[72] Hammerton and Thomson, p.161.

These events laid the foundation for the re-establishment of family relationships, leading to ongoing reciprocal visits over the years.

Some of the child migrants amongst my participant group felt a connection with their home country upon returning to Britain, whilst others were ambivalent about tracing their cultural origins. It took Valerie Joubert eight years to save up and return to England in 1978. Her sister Karen Gardner was able to join her two years later, and then stayed almost a year. The sisters had experienced many challenges during their early years in Australia and were consequently reluctant migrants for many years. Their eagerly anticipated return visits to England provided a sense of homecoming:

> Valerie: I enjoyed it, because I knew my aunts and uncles and we connected…there was a sense of connecting.
>
> Karen: When I first went back, my uncle was at the airport, and he didn't look like he'd changed much. He welcomed me and I thought, 'They *do* want us back!' And when we went to Nan's, nothing had changed; I mean, she looked older, but the house was the same, the furniture was the same, it smelt the same…It was like stepping back in time. And it was like, this is home. This is where we belong.

The sisters keenly felt the pull of family in both countries and were eventually called back to Australia following their mother's illness:

> Karen: I could have stayed, I think. Given the chance, I could have stayed. We got used to visiting Nan again and doing little things for them. You sort of became…family again. But then, Mum got ill and we had to come back. We were planning a trip to Europe, in the Easter break— but then we got the message from Dad.

They returned to England again for a holiday in 1983, then ten years after that for the funeral of their beloved Nan Page, their maternal grandmother. Adjusting to their parents' migration decision was, for the sisters, an emotional and difficult process. Today, after four decades in Australia, they have mostly become reconciled to their experiences of being caught between the two worlds.

Rosemary Davey revisited England in 1974, when she was eighteen, but 'felt like such a tourist—not like [coming] home at all.' It wasn't until a second trip in 2009 with her husband that Rosemary reconnected with her home country:

> But…when I went back last year, I did feel a bit emotional…I took Bill to see the house I was born in: Saltdean, near Brighton, in a proper semi-detached, with views to the coast—a very pretty place. The main street hasn't changed…the first school I went to is still there and all that kind of thing. There was a connection…I wondered how my life would have been if they haven't had come.[73]

Carol Kerten returned to England with her family in 1972, two years after migrating to Australia. The transient lifestyle she had already experienced in Australia extended to her country of birth, negating any sense of returning 'home':

> Probably it wasn't such a big deal going back [when we did] because I think, at nine, you don't really have a strong bond [with England]. We had a lot of cousins and a few friends, but a lot had happened since we came to Australia. We came out in 1970…we travelled a lot, we didn't have a lot of roots that we put down.

Returning as an adult with her husband fourteen years later did not evoke a sense of tangible connection with England, but the trip was enjoyed as an exciting holiday:

> That was different, because I wanted to go back; I wanted to have a look at where I came from…and I went and saw family, friends, and we toured through England, Scotland, Wales…it was very much a place to visit—a holiday. It wasn't going home, because England was no longer home by that point.[74]

Although well adjusted to life in Australia, one child migrant has never consciously chosen one country over the other. After four and a half decades, she has forged for herself a place of reconciliation between the two countries. She has fully chosen neither one over the other and embraces elements of both:

> For me, it [my parents' migration] was the right decision. It was positive for me. And the things that I still yearn for about England, if you like, are the intangibles; the green, the quality of the light [which] is different in England. And yet…I still love the smell of the rain on hot sand, which you never have in England. And sometimes, here, particularly in summer—early in the morning or late at night—you get that…light. And I grab that, I think, that's the light that I love. And the birdsong...but we have that here, too—you just have to listen differently.[75]

[73] Interview Rosemary Davey.
[74] Interview Carol Kerten.
[75] Interview with child migrant, [name withheld].

A foot in both countries: the serial returnees.

Of the more than one million Britons who immigrated to Australia between 1947 and the mid-1970's, about a quarter returned home.[76] Hammerton and Thomson caution that the true figure would have been much higher, for many remorseful migrants were 'trapped' in Australia by the economics of funding their return passage and then starting again back in Britain. The phenomenon of the serial returnees further confused migrant statisticians by travelling back and forth between the two countries, unable to settle in either. Extended contact with a different country and culture had unobtrusively altered their outlook and values and many were unable fully to identify with either country.[77] Dave Thomas recalled 'friends that couldn't settle; they'd be back home to England for twelve months, then back here for a year, and so on…they did that for thirty years'.[78] Families were often irreversibly fractured, with children and extended family left behind in both countries.[79] Three of my child migrants experienced the divorce of their parents during their early years in Australia. All of these children saw one of their parents return to England while they remained in Australia with the other.

Thomson's research indicates that British returnees of the period were not overwhelmingly influenced by economic or climatic factors, or even aspects of the Australian lifestyle. Overwhelmingly, homesickness and the complicated pull of family responsibilities and relationships were the main reasons cited by returnees.[80] Some blamed returnee rates upon the ease of migration during this heady era; there is no doubt that the generous acceptance rates, cheap fares and optimistic propaganda from Australia House did little to deter those acting on a whim or with unrealistic expectations.[81] Pat McGlone recalls that return rates were high amongst his fellow 'Little Brothers', estimating that over half went back once they had served their required two years in Australia. He readily acknowledged that, in view of their youth, many did not give serious thought to their migration decision in the first place, viewing the Big Brother Scheme as both an adventure and extended working holiday. Consequently, some of Pat's compatriots struggled to see out their two-year commitment. He recalled a young friend taking rather extreme measures in order to speed up the process:

[76] Thomson, 2003, p.55.
[77] Appleyard, p.102.
[78] Interview Jeremy Griffiths.
[79] Peters, p.283.
[80] Thomson, 2003, p.59.
[81] Hammerton and Thomson, p.278.

> There were 23 of us 'Little Brothers' originally and…I only kept in contact with two of them, really. The second guy; he was terribly unsettled as well…So when the first guy decided to go home, I went and saw him off…he went back on *The Fairsky*, I think. The second guy came along; we went on board, like you can do…and he decided to stow away on the boat. So…what could I do? I left the boat on my own, waved goodbye to the first guy (and the second, as it happened). The boat left from Sydney… he did get arrested, after a few days. He was put ashore in Brisbane and was jailed for 14 days, I think.[82]

Children were often the unwilling victims of returnee parents: having not being consulted in the first place about the emigration decision, they continued to have little say in the return, jeopardising their settlement in either country. Vince O'Neil recalled being extremely unhappy at his parents' decision to return to England after living in Australia for three years. His mother initiated the family's return, as she was unable to settle the first time around. The family remained in Britain for another two years before finally returning to Australia, after which time she was able to adjust. Vince's mother now calls this country home, returning for a holiday to England every few years. Today, Vince considers that his family were extremely fortunate to have been able to fund their re-emigration:

> I think [Dad's] train of thought was, 'I'll take her [Mum] back just to *show* her…to prove the point, that this place isn't what you think it is: in 1975-76, England was struggling [economically]. It worked, and we came back—but it was an expensive lesson…We didn't get any subsidies the second time around. No second chances…but money was no object. I didn't want to live back in England. Neither did my Dad.[83]

Pat McGlone was the only one of my child migrant participants who returned to England permanently. He lived in Australia for eight years then went back, eventually marrying an Irish girl. Pat encouraged his daughter to emigrate to Western Australia and today, with family in both countries, he has fashioned a life that includes both:

> I had….and still do…a foot in both countries. Lately, with my new granddaughter, [time spent in each country has] been closer to half and half! I just think that [for me], England is more accessible to Ireland, where I've now got family…There are so many places you can get to from England, without having to go halfway around the world. But…Australia is brilliant. I love the freedom, the space, the climate, the people; the whole experience.[84]

[82] Interview Patrick McGlone.
[83] Interview Vince O'Neil.
[84] Interview Patrick McGlone.

Some British migrants planned their return for decades, waiting until their children were adults and financial security was achieved before returning to live out their retirement years back home. As previously mentioned, Chris Pepper's parents originally migrated to help their homesick daughter already living in Australia, but they did not adapt well. As a child, Chris was eager to stay in their new country, so his parents remained for the sake of their children, assuaging their homesickness with occasional holidays to England. They returned to live when Chris' father retired in 1988, but Chris suspected that they did not resettle successfully. Tragically, Chris's mother died of cancer three years after returning to England. His father was diagnosed with lymphoma two years later, in 1993. Chris' father could not reunite with his adult children living in Australia until a week before he died, when they flew over to visit him for Christmas that same year:

> Mum and Dad weren't [returnee migrants]; they came out, they stayed until they retired, they went back. Once Mum had passed, Dad got pretty lonely, because he's not an extrovert, he stayed home.
>
> He said in a letter once, 'You don't realise you're in paradise until you leave.' Something like that; he was referring to Australia. He was telling Sue [sister] and I that he'd made the wrong decision. We really wanted him to come back, but [by then] he wasn't well enough. The doctors wouldn't allow it.[85]

The returnee migrants' stories are of significant importance to migration history, which usually focuses upon the challenges of those who stay. Recent studies initiated by Thomson have sought to redress this imbalance, who found that the returnees were 'invisible twice over'.[86]

Getting the lobotomy done: Australian Citizenship.

Many British migrants, in particular the older generation, struggle to reconcile their own national identity against a sense of belonging to their adopted country. Citizenship was regarded with general ambivalence amongst my adult participants, revealing an attachment to both countries that is rarely acknowledged. Conversely, the child migrants I spoke to seemed to embrace citizenship as a matter of course, sometimes at the request of their own children, or for practical reasons. For Vince O'Neil, his family's successful re-emigration to Australia

[85]Interview Chris Pepper.
[86] Hammerton and Thomson, pp's.264, 301.

was a source of gratitude and pride which was promptly recognized by way of citizenship: 'I had the lobotomy done [Australian Citizenship] back in 1980…as soon as we could, we got it done. The Old Man…always loved Australia'.[87] Those amongst the younger generation who had not become Australian citizens cited time and cost factors as common excuses, although some said that they would become naturalised if they had to; for example, as a condition of employment or to facilitate overseas travelling.

Many of the older generation have divided loyalties or national identities between the two countries that can be irreconcilable. As Hammerton & Thomson noted, these British migrants arrived in Australia without the need for passports in the first place and many consider that Australian citizenship should be automatic.[88] Bert Slack candidly discussed the feelings of national identity which he holds for both his birth and adopted countries, which he finds are irreconcilable to the point of contradiction:

> My England doesn't exist anymore…I mean, England of my youth—when it had pride…It used to be a proud, fighting nation—now look at us. It's totally different to this lifestyle [Australia]. Here, I've got room to move; even now, when I'm getting old. It's my home, I love it here.
>
> But...I don't see myself as Australian. I'll always be English, never Australian: I'm just not. Because…the formative years were spent in England; my history is Anglo-Saxon English. I'll never be an Australian...but I do believe I live at peace, here. It's a great country.[89]

Denice Fouweather also struggles with a sense of dual identity that is shared by many of the older generation of British migrants. Her comments reveal this internalised 'see-saw' where regret and homesickness vie with the immense pride she feels for the life she built with Harry, together with the achievements of her children and grandchildren: 'Oh, I still call England home. When we go off to England, we say, 'We're going home.' I mean, I wouldn't dream of leaving [the] 'kids and going back to England to live…we came for't kids and that's what we've done.[90] It is therefore understandable that the parent migrants of my group are overall more reluctant to take out Australian citizenship than their children. As Peters notes, personal conflict can accompany this decision, which for some is considered the final betrayal, or relinquishment of their traditional roots. Many British migrants consider citizenship to be unnecessary as they had paid their dues to Australia by way of the

[87] Interview Vince O'Neil.
[88] Hammerton and Thomson, p.342.
[89] Interview Bert and Milly Slack
[90] Interview Harry and Denice Fouweather.

accomplishments of their children, together with paying taxes throughout their working lives.[91]

Roger Dallas was almost thirteen when he arrived in 1965 and fully intends to take out Australian citizenship. He does, however, resent the cost and inconvenience that is today required of the migration process, which applies equally to long-term Australian residents in possession of permanent visas, as it does to new migrants:

> I've actually never been naturalised; we [with wife Madeleine] went for the test two years ago and passed with no problems—we've been here a long time. But, I just thought—when we came all those years ago, we didn't need a visa to come and in and out of the country. We're permanent residents. I thought to myself, I want to be Australian, but why should we pay $500 just for a piece of paper when we've lived here all these years? It irks me...but I'll get it done eventually.[92]

Karen Gardner was a child migrant of eight when she migrated in 1970. Unlike many of her parents' generation, she accepts her dual loyalties to both England and Australia and dismissed the notion of having to choose between them as unnecessary:

> Citizenship is a contentious issue with my husband! He got his last year—mind you, only so he could travel. He said to me, 'Well, how about it?' And I thought, Do I really want to join him? I'm happy the way I am: a 'British-Australian'. I don't think that I should have to choose.[93]

Putnins endorses this outlook as the best possible outcome of the migration experience; where the immigrant feels emotionally attached to Australia without losing their attachment to the homeland. He endorsed simultaneous identification with both host country and homeland, which involved 'not just feeling half host and half ethnic, but to feel strong identification with *both* the ethnic and host groups.'[94]

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[91] Peters, p.285.
[92] Interview Roger Dallas.
[93] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert.
[94] Putnins, Aldis L. 'Immigrant adjustment: a note on Kovacs and Cropley's model [Kovacs, M. L. and Cropley, A. J., "Alienation and the assimilation of immigrants," in v.10 no.3, Aug 1975: 221-230] [online]. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, v.11, no.3, Aug 1976: p. 211.

Chapter Seven: remembering and relearning

The migrant children: a different mindset.

Many migrant children vindicated the migration decision of their parents by availing themselves of better opportunities to further their education and change their occupational and social status. There were few 'overnight success stories' amongst the original Ten Pound Poms; instead, tertiary education and professional success would be pursued by their children.[1] In terms of living standards, my participants reported widely differing experiences. Education invariably proved to be the key to transcending social barriers and improving lifestyle choices, but the process was almost never easy. Several of my child migrant participants recalled that migration stalled, or in a few cases, permanently cancelled their educational prospects. Conversely, others consider that Australia afforded educational and career opportunities that would not have been available in Britain.

Melonie Miller came from a large, working class Scottish family. She endured a difficult childhood in Australia, growing up in the British enclave of Elizabeth in South Australia. Mel put herself through university and is today employed in aged care management. She recalls her struggle to make a better future for herself:

> As we got older, it all fell away: the boys [brothers] got onto drugs and alcohol, my sister unfortunately passed away, and it was just me. I went to university and got a degree first, which my parents couldn't accept; you go out and work. I was eighteen and they weren't going to be supporting me, so they threw me out. I had to get a job, house and all that and put myself through uni...both graduations, my parents wouldn't attend…I tried, even back then, to make my mother see that this was what she wanted; to have something better for me. Or was she annoyed that I hadn't [also] gone to the Holden factory? I couldn't understand…to this day, I'm still just a snob.[2]

Michelle Beor's parents divorced after only a few years in Australia, and she credits her mother's determination that her daughter would transcend her own working class background with helping her to get through university. Although similar educational opportunities existed by the 1960s in Britain, Michelle views her situation in Australia in a positive light compared with England:

> If I look at my cousins [in England], certainly I'm better off in terms of education standards than all of them…I'm more highly qualified and owned by own home

[1] Hammerton and Thomson, p.215.
[2] Interview Melonie Millar.

> earlier, and did it on my own, those sorts of things. They have no hope of doing any of this in England….certainly, I'm better off financially, educationally.[3]

The global village: relearning the Ten Pound Pom experience.

The extent to which their British heritage affected the childhood of my child migrant participants varied considerably; however, all acknowledged that their Ten Pound Pom experiences have grown more important as they reached adulthood and become parents, and in some cases grandparents, themselves. My group spoke of reconciliations with parents about childhood difficulties faced during the early years in Australia, together with, in turn, an appreciation of the challenges their parents had overcome. Some have taken their children back to their birth country, whilst others are researching their own family history. Several spoke of the ways in which they are today passing on this heritage to their own children.

For migrant children, their parents' history—consciously or otherwise—remains central to their own identity. Often pride in their parents' courage and achievements is only realised in later years, from an adult perspective. When I collaborated in my mother's eulogy in August 2010 with my brother and sister, we found ourselves drawn to her early experiences in Australia. We came fully to appreciate, possibly for the first time, the full extent of the strength and quiet determination she possessed in order to make a success of her new life for the sake of her family. Part of her eulogy read:

> Now that we all have children ourselves, we are only just starting to comprehend how it must have been for Mum, who emigrated with her husband and three small children in 1969 as 'Ten Pound Poms'. Imagine—three children aged one, two and three-years-old in a brand new country, with no friends or family… and no disposable nappies! Typically of Mum, she would have just gotten on with the business of being Mum, something she was so good at that we undoubtedly took her for granted.

Family migration to a new country half a world away is a significant moment of 'crisis and dislocation' which Tebbutt acknowledges closes a door into family memory, often intensifying 'the desire to find a key with which to open it'.[4] Rosemary Davey began consciously to embrace her British roots upon a return trip to England in 2009, over four decades after migrating. She also began to appreciate the extent of the challenges which her mother must have faced during the early years, observing: 'I can see why Mum didn't want to

[3] Interview Michelle Beor.
[4] Melanie Tebbutt, 'Imagined Families and Vanished Communities: Memories of a Working-class Life in Northampton' . *History Workshop Journal* Issue 73 Advance Access Publication 5 March 2012 p. 146.

leave, and can appreciate how hard it must have been for her. You appreciate these things as an adult—as a child, it's just a big adventure.[5] Whilst Rosemary settled easily into her new life and today considers herself 'meant to be Australian and not English', she has more recently (together with her sister) taken a keen interest in her family's cultural origins. The sisters take pride in their Irish heritage on their mother's side and are researching their Irish ancestry. They have discovered a mutual connection through their shared history and intend to pass this heritage on to their own children.

As an adult, Roger Dallas was able to reconcile with his father about his traumatic school years in Australia:

> Kids are pretty resilient…and my parents were pretty oblivious (they were busy trying to settle in and make a life for us). My Dad didn't even know about all the problems I was having at school, or that I eventually intended leaving. He said to me (years later),' I'm sorry Rog, if I'd have know all this was going to happen to you, I'd never have brought you out', and I said, 'That's alright, Dad, I've got broad shoulders and I wasn't the only one'. I told him, 'This is the place I want to live and it's been good for [my own] kids'.[6]

Stuart Slack arrived in Australia at the age of seven and embraced an archetypical Australian upbringing: 'a pair of shorts, my gun and away you go'. Today, he states that he 'let go of my British side years ago.' Mark Bullimore denied his English heritage until reaching adulthood:

> I know for me, growing up—in Primary School and then again in High School—people would say to me, 'Are you a Pom?' And I would turn around and say, 'No.' It wasn't until my twenties that I would say, 'I was born in England, but I am Australian.' I think I just embraced the whole Australian thing…it was easier![7]

Others attempted to re-trace their own roots and discover their cultural identity, with many of my child migrant participants returning as an adult for a visit, sometimes with their own children in tow. Following a childhood bereft of siblings or extended family, Michelle Beor has taken her own four children on several return trips to England, potentially maintaining international family relationships into the future. Michelle hopes to instil in her children a sense of their own British heritage whilst firmly retaining their Australian roots:

[5] Interview Rosemary Davey.
[6] Interview Roger Dallas.
[7] Interview Bullimores.

> [England is] home in that your family are there and it's lovely to see them…and it's lovely to see everything that you've heard about from your parents. But…after six or eight weeks there, it's always good to come back to Australia, because that really is home. [The children] enjoyed meeting their relatives there and enjoyed what we did there: the experience, the fun…the history. It's certainly all things that we could never have shown them here. But to them, it's just a place to visit. [The two oldest] know that Mummy was born there.[8]

Often, ongoing links to Britain are independently initiated by the child migrants and fostered into adulthood. I wrote to my English cousin throughout my childhood in Australia, using iconic blue aerogrammes, and was proud to have an overseas penfriend. In 1989, I travelled with my sister to England, where we were both bridesmaids at her wedding. Today, e-mails have replaced aerogrammes and our parents' carefully orchestrated Christmas telephone call to England now takes the form of an international *Skype* conversation gathered around the laptop. There is no doubt that the advent of social media and communications technology that is reducing the world to a 'global village' is also capable of confounding assimilationist ideology, which Hammerton and Thomson note; 'generally assumes a fading commitment of later generations to the migrant identity'.[9] Alexander also refutes this assumption, asserting instead 'the persistence and vitality of spoken memory and family story, which connects living to future as well as past generations and is not yet wiped out by migration, war, or the Internet as cultural pessimists have feared'.[10]

Whilst there were examples in my group of child migrants who have relinquished all familial ties to the home country, some of their Australian-born children make use of this technology to foster inter-global relationships with their own generation of overseas extended family. My teenage son and some of his fellow Australian-born cousins are in regular contact with their British second cousins via social media such as *Facebook* and *Skype* and some are already planning overseas visits in the future. My ten-year-old daughter is immensely proud of her 'e-pal', my English cousin's daughter, and they regularly e-mail each other notes, drawings and photographs. My children do not give conscious thought to the fact that they are actively fostering an interest in their family heritage; for them, these are simply fun and social pastimes that may lead to future travel opportunities. They are, of course, continuing the inter-global communications to overseas extended family that were originally initiated by

[8] Interview Michelle Beor.
[9] Hammerton and Thomson, p.350.
[10] Sally Alexander, '"Do Grandmas have husbands?" Generational Memory and Twentieth-Century Women's Lives', *Oral History Review*, Autumn 2009, p. 167.

their migrant predecessors two generations earlier. Whilst I did not speak to any of the Australian-born children of my participants, the extent of their interest in their British heritage posits an area worthy of further investigation.

For child migrants, the remembering of family history is often a process of relearning events and anecdotes experienced from the child's perspective and today recalled from the viewpoint of an adult. The dilution of family history over generations may be addressed by the researching and recording of family history, as Karen Gardner's son Ben has done. As part of his undergraduate studies, in 2009 Ben compiled *Sunshine and Oranges: a ten-year history of the Australian O'Dells 1969-1979*, which is a significant account of the migration and early years of his grandparents and parents from England to Australia. The ongoing importance of the original migration decision is not lost on this Australian-born child of a child migrant, as evidenced by Ben's touching dedication: 'Dedicated to Nan and Pop O'Dell who took a chance 39 years ago. Thank you…we wouldn't be here without you.'[11] Indeed, Tebbutt notes the proliferation over the past two decades 'of writers and academics who have published family or parental memoirs which explore both their own subjectivities and family relationships, shaped by very different lives and expectations'.[12]

For many families, migration provided the opportunity to examine and instigate changes to entrenched parental practices, with many of my adult participants proudly noting the close relationships they have built with their own children in Australia. Several of my child migrant interviewees noted the impact of their parents' outlook upon their migration experience and are today guided by these examples in their own parenting styles. Jeremy Griffiths today regards the positive attitude of his parents to their new country as an integral part of his successful adaptation to Australia:

> I've always thought that we were lucky to come over here… I think that a lot of [my positive outlook] has been shaped by my parents. If I'd grown up with parents who were constantly saying, 'I wish we'd gone back, I wish we hadn't come here, we've done the wrong thing…'; I'd probably have picked that up as a kid and grown up with those memories, that outlook. But because my Dad found the job he wanted, he did

[11] Benjamin B. Gardner, *Sunshine and Oranges: a ten-year history of the Australian O'Dells 1969-1979.* Unpublished manuscript, 2009: Edith Cowan University.
[12] Tebbutt, p. 145.

> well. My Mum too—this lifestyle suited them… It's like we were born in the wrong place, but luckily we were able to fix that [by migrating to Australia].[13]

Carol Kerten considers that the 'Britishness' of her parents' outlook was tempered and modified by their extensive travels around Australia and exposure to a wide range of experiences:

> We still had a British upbringing, because your parents are British, even if you aren't in Britain. But I suppose I also look at it that it's more of a social and cultural upbringing, as opposed to being British…Because of what Australia is and how big and open it all is. It's easier to travel in Australia, it's not a small little place. Everything's open…it's a much broader way of thinking.[14]

Today, viewing her mother from an adult perspective, Rosemary Davey is able to identify some of the less flexible 'British' aspects of her mother's parenting style that impacted upon her migration experience. She is endeavouring to modify these behaviours in her own approaches to parenting:

> My parents were quite strict, and you didn't discuss anything outside of the family: what do they call it, the 'Stiff Upper Lip'? Don't show your emotions; don't cry…my sister and I have grown up to be quite tough cookies, I guess, so we are trying to mellow a bit, now! With my own kids…there are some ways in which I do try to be different.[15]

The next generation: Conclusions

My study adds to the growing repository of the Ten Pound Pom experience, shading our existing understanding of this migration phenomenon with recollections that focus upon the perspectives of the children. Further, my preference for oral history as a methodology has provided insights that invite further investigation, including the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. My cultural identification with the interviewees may well have influenced the responses I received, in particular, in the case of participants who were also family members. Undoubtedly, nuances including regional accents, pauses and silences, narrative inflections and structure are as significant as the varied memories presented here of the British-Australian experience, warranting further discussion. Examination of such methodological concerns of oral history, which overlap into the expanding field of memory studies, posits a fascinating aspect of this field for future study.

[13] Interview Jeremy Griffiths and David Thomas.
[14] Interview Carol Kerten.
[15] Interview Rosemary Davey.

As I have used a relatively small focus group, conclusive generalisations must be tempered with caution. There is no doubt that these accounts are remarkable, not only in the diversity of experiences recalled, but, conversely, in the identification of common traits encountered. Many of my participants, in particular the adult migrants, readily acknowledged the pivotal impact of their Ten Pound Pom experiences upon their lives into the present. As the adult migrants reflected upon the enduring impact of a migration decision made many years ago, they did so almost always with pride in their own Australian extended family of today. Many of my then-child migrants assumed a dilution of memory, and indeed, relevance over time regarding a decision made on their behalf during childhood. All were enthusiastic participants and several expressed surprise as the ongoing ramifications—not only upon themselves but their own children, also—of an action made long ago were comprehended. Jeremy Griffiths commented that 'I'm surprised that we talked as long as we did. I didn't think that we had as much to say about this'.[16] Alexander notes that the familial memories of many modern British families have been fractured (but not broken) by a myriad of factors including social aspiration, migration, economic restructuring and political crises and, increasingly in the late twentieth-century, divorce. As she observes, 'Generational memories in these fractured, migratory families have to be built up, a process [that is] never one way and only ever partly conscious'.[17]

Few of my adult and none of my child migrants harboured lasting regrets into the present about this pivotal decision, with the latter overwhelmingly professing gratitude for their parents' actions. Alan Fouweather emphatically stated that 'In hindsight, I would thank my father a thousand times for bringing us here, because I think that it's the best thing he ever did for all four of us. Five of us—that includes Mum.'[18]

Intergenerational conflict experienced amongst my group was seeded in common factors including nomadic lifestyles and unsociable working hours, which for some impacted negatively upon the child-parent relationships and early years in Australia. These factors were, of course, a consequence of the migrant parents' urgent and well-intentioned need to get ahead (and thus justify the migration decision) by achieving financial security for their family. Many of my child migrants have recognized these shortfalls as adults and are today working to ensure that this pattern is not repeated in their own parenting. Conversely, several

16 Interview Jeremy Griffiths.
17 Alexander, p. 162.
18Interview Alan Fouweather.

of my adult migrants are today more actively involved in their grandchildren's care and upbringing, providing the familial support networks that migration once deprived them of.

Some of the child migrants experienced frustration or even pity at their parents' evident inability to integrate into Australian society, or to renounce their British allegiance. Today these traits are invariably met with acceptance and a level of understanding. Melonie Millar observed of her parents: 'Children are...well, if my parents had come over as children, I think that it might have been different for them as well. I think...the fear of the unknown and the need to be in your comfort zone is greater for adults. That fear actually increases as you get older.'[19] Peters finds that, eventually, 'the realisation comes that, despite the confusion, conflict and search for belonging that intermittently consume many immigrants' lives, the culture they have been instrumental in creating is, in fact, "home" to their offspring'.[20]

None of my child participants harbours lasting regret about their parents' decision to migrate, although many stipulated that their adjustment to a new country and lifestyle was far from easy. Carol Kerten said of her childhood migration 'It's not an experience I look back upon with pleasure, by any means; but it shaped us [siblings] and got us where we are today.' Several adult participants remained unreconciled about their identity as migrants and were unable, or at least reluctant, fully to commit to either country. Many of my child participants acknowledged a markedly diluted sense of allegiance to Britain than have their parents; yet most were motivated to revisit their birth country in later years, or are taking an increased interest in their British heritage as their parents grow older and die. Most of my child migrants had not fully acknowledged the extent of their interest in the family's heritage, yet had subconsciously or, through force of habit, passed on some of their British traits and interests to their own children. As Valerie Joubert, an English child migrant who endured a testing childhood in Australia, remarked, 'We are who we are…in spite of everything!'[21]

[19] Interview Melonie Millar.
[20] Peters, p.288.
[21] Interview Karen Gardner and Valerie Joubert.

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Appendix 1

List of Participants

Oral Interviews

Parent migrants:

Adult migrant [name withheld], arrived 1966, at her residence on 11 March 2010.

Jack and Eunice Bullimore, interviewed with their son, Mark Bullimore, arrived October, 1969, at Mark's Roleystone residence on 2 March, 2010.

Glennis Dewsnap, arrived December 1969, at Rowethorpe Care Awaiting Placement, Bentley, on 3 February, 2010.

Henry Dewsnap, arrived December 1969, at his Belmont residence on 10 February 2010.

Harry and Denice Fouweather, arrived April 1968, at their Belmont residence on 25 July 2010.

John and Jean Richardson, arrived December 1969, at their Wanneroo residence on15 February 2010.

Bert and Milly Slack, arrived April 1970, at their Armadale residence on 26 June, 2010.

Child migrants

Michelle Beor, arrived January 1966, at her Noranda residence on 15 February, 2010.

Mark Bullimore, arrived October, 1969, interviewed with his parents, Jack and Eunice Bullimore, at Mark's Roleystone residence on 2 March, 2010.

Child migrant [name withheld], arrived 1966, at her residence on 23 June 2010.

Roger Dallas, arrived 1965, at his Ocean Reef home on 9 April, 2010.

Rosemary Davey, arrived September 1966, at her Roleystone residence on 8 March, 2010.

Alan Fouweather, arrived April 1968, at the author's Roleystone residence on 18 March 2010.

Karen Gardner, interviewed with her sister, Valerie Joubert, arrived October 1970, on 7 April 2010 at Karen's Byford residence.

List of Participants, cont'd

Child migrants, cont'd

Jeremy Griffiths, arrived 1969, interviewed with his friend, David Thomas, arrived October 1970, on 28 June 2010 at Jeremy's Bedfordale residence.

Valerie Joubert, arrived October 1970, interviewed with her sister, Karen Gardner, on 7 April 2010, at Karen's Byford residence.

Carol Kerten, arrived April 1970, at the author's Roleystone residence on 20 March 2010.

Patrick McGlone, arrived January 1960, at his daughter's Roleystone residence on 24 February 2010.

Melonie Millar, arrived 1969, at Rowethorpe Care Awaiting Placement, Bentley, on 10 February 2010

Gail Nock, arrived 1972, at her Mount Richon residence on 28 June 2010.

Vince O'Neil, arrived 1974, at his Churchman Brooke residence on 10 March 2010.

Chris Pepper, arrived May 1972, at his Maylands residence on 16 March 2010.

Stuart Slack, arrived April 1970, at his Armadale residence on 25 July, 2010.

David Thomas, arrived October 1970, interviewed with his friend, Jeremy Griffiths, arrived 1969, on 28 June 2010 at Jeremy's Bedfordale residence.

Written interviews

Child migrants

Gail Kirby, arrived December 1969, personal communication (typewritten response) dated 3 January 2010.

Anne-Marie Walker, arrived 1970, personal communication (e-mail response) dated 3 January 2010.

Appendix II

Interview Questions, Information Letter and Consent Form

Karen Fouweather Project 3741

Ten Pounds for Adults, Kids Travel Free: Critical Essay component.

Research conducted by Karen Fouweather towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Edith Cowan University, Mount Lawley, Western Australia.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Children of British Migrants

- When did you migrate to Australia?
- Who did you migrate with?
- Where were you living in England?
- How old were you when you migrated to Australia?
- How clear are your recollections of your life in England?
- How did you travel to Australia when you migrated and what were your recollections of the journey?
- Have you stayed in contact with any people that you met during your trip?
- What were your first impressions of Australia?
- Where did you first go to school?
- Who were your first friends in Australia?
- Did you have any particular challenges in settling in to the Australian way of life?
- What is your most vivid memory about your early days living in Australia?
- How did your parents/siblings find living in Australia?
- Have you returned to England since you migrated to Australia and if so, what were your feelings about returning?
- Do you think that your parents made the right decision in migrating to Australia?
- Have you ever wished that you could migrate back to England?
- Have you now become an Australian citizen?

Appendix II

Karen Fouweather Project 3741

Ten Pounds for Adults, Kids Travel Free: Critical Essay component.

Research conducted by Karen Fouweather towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Edith Cowan University, Mount Lawley, Western Australia.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Parent British Migrants

- Where did you live in Britain?
- What were the circumstances of your decision to migrate to Australia?
- When did you migrate to Australia?
- How did you travel to Australia and what are your recollections of the journey?
- Did you keep in contact with your friends and relatives in Britain? Or any people that you met during your trip?
- Where did you stay when you first arrived in Australia?
- What were your first impressions of Australia?
- What did you miss the most about Britain?
- How did your children [if applicable] adapt to their new home? Consider their schooling, making friends, fitting in, the climate, etc.
- Who were your first friends/work colleges in Australia?
- Where was your/your spouse's first place of employment in Australia? Did the circumstances differ greatly than that of England?
- How did your economic circumstances in Australia compare to those of Britain- where you better or worse off?
- Did you have any particular challenges in settling in to the Australian way of life?
- What is your most vivid memory about your early days living in Australia?
- Do you think that you made the right decision in migrating to Australia?
- Have you returned to England since you migrated, and if so, what were your feelings about returning?
- Have you ever regretted migrating to Australia?
- Have you now become an Australian citizen?

MOUNT LAWLEY
CAMPUS

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Mount Lawley
Western Australia 6050
Telephone 134328
Facsimile 9370 2910

ABN 54 361 485 361

Appendix II

Information Letter

[Date]

[Name and address]

Dear [name],

INFORMATION LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

CREATIVE AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project, which is being conducted as part of the requirements of the following post graduate research project:

Principal Researcher: Karen Fouweather
Course: 115 Doctor of Philosophy, Research Project 3741
School of Communications and Arts, Faculty of Education and Arts
Supervisor: Associate Professor Dr Jill Dury
Ph 9370 6308 E-mail: j.durey@ecu.edu.au

The purpose of the project is to produce the following:

1. Autobiographical/fictional novel entitled *The Red Pipe,* set in Port Hedland during the 1970's (approx 60,000 words)
2. Critical essay examining the impact of migration upon the British children (aged 2-18 years old) who travelled to Australia under the height of the assisted passage scheme during the 1960's (approx 40,000 words)

In view of your [details], your contributions would be extremely helpful to item 2 of the project.

If you choose to participate in this project, you will be asked to participate in an interview. I have attached some sample questions for your information.

The information obtained from this interview will be used to complete the requirements for the thesis noted above, and only the principal researcher and the supervisor will have access to the information. The interview will last for a maximum of one hour. Any information or details given for this study will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this project. In addition, any recording of the interview will be erased at the completion of the project, which will be by 30 September 2012.

Alternatively, and with your permission, a copy of the recording and/or transcript will be offered as a permanent addition to the Oral History Collection held at the Battye Library, State Library of Western

Appendix II, cont'd

Information Letter

Australia. If you wish your name not to be mentioned in the project, please let me know at the time of the interview and indicate this on the consent form.

There should be no risk or discomfort to you, and participation in this project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any time without explanation or penalty. You are also free to ask for any information which identifies you to be withdrawn from the study.

I also require you to sign a consent form (attached) before the interview.

If you would like any further information about the project, please contact me as follows**:**

Principal Researcher
Karen Fouweather
Contact details: Ph (08) 9496 1493 m 04179 36509
e-mail: k.fouweather@ecu.edu.au
Mailing address: 177 Peet Road, Roleystone WA 6111

Should you decide at any time to withdraw your participation from this exercise, please contact either myself or my supervisor, Dr Jill Durey.

Thanking you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Fouweather

EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

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ABN 54 361 485 361

Appendix II

CONSENT FORM

CREATIVE AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT 3741

Principal Researcher: Karen Fouweather

I have been provided with a copy of the Information Letter, explaining the project.
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that participation in the research project will involve an interview, and that only the principal researcher and supervisor will have access to the information obtained from this interview. That information will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the project. I also understand that the interview will last for a maximum of one hour. In addition, any recording of this interview will be deleted at the completion of this project, which will be by 30 September 2012. Alternatively, and with my permission, a copy of the recording and/or transcript will be offered as a permanent addition to the Oral History Collection held at the Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia. I am also able to state whether or not I wish my name to be mentioned in the research project.

I understand that if I sign this consent form, I am still free to withdraw from further participation at any time without explanation or penalty. Although I hereby give my consent for the following principal researcher to quote or paraphrase my answers in the research project, I am also free, if I change my mind, to ask for any information which identifies me to be withdrawn from the study.

I freely agree to participate in the project

……
Signature

……
Date

I am **willing/unwilling** for my name to be included in the research project.

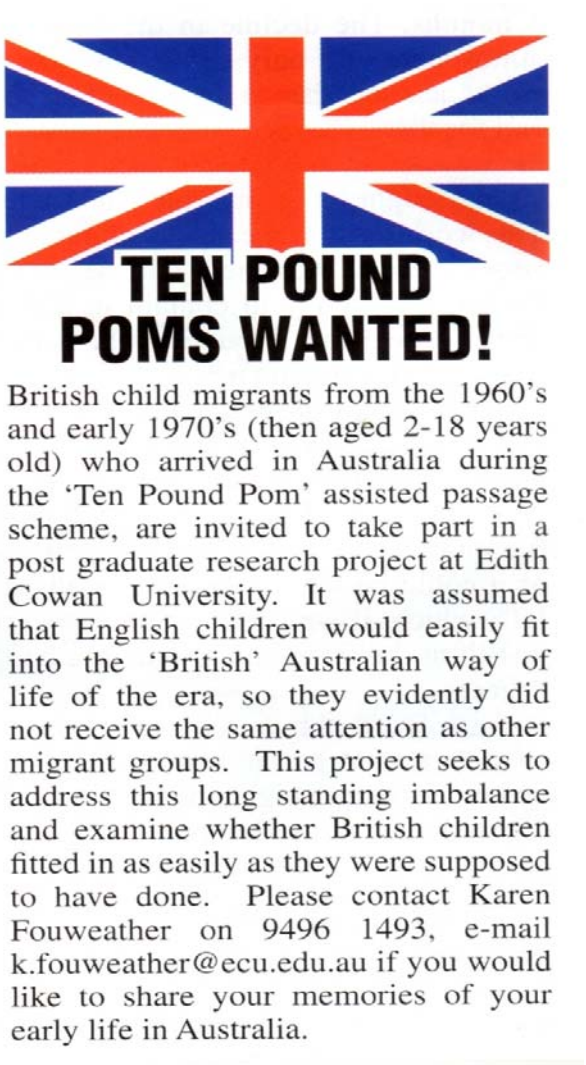
……

Signature
……

Date

Appendix III

Publicity



TEN POUND POMS WANTED!

British child migrants from the 1960's and early 1970's (then aged 2-18 years old) who arrived in Australia during the 'Ten Pound Pom' assisted passage scheme, are invited to take part in a post graduate research project at Edith Cowan University. It was assumed that English children would easily fit into the 'British' Australian way of life of the era, so they evidently did not receive the same attention as other migrant groups. This project seeks to address this long standing imbalance and examine whether British children fitted in as easily as they were supposed to have done. Please contact Karen Fouweather on 9496 1493, e-mail k.fouweather@ecu.edu.au if you would like to share your memories of your early life in Australia.

Above: Advertisement calling for research participants. *The Valley Reporter*, p. 2, Issue 67, Feb/Mar 2010.

The Red Pipe

Creative component: A Novella set in Port Hedland

Karen Fouweather
2012

Presented as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, School of Communications and Arts, Faculty of Education and Arts at Edith Cowan University, Mount Lawley, Western Australia. Supervisor: Associate Professor Dr Jill Durey

It says a lot for the phlegm of Norwesters—whether they have been there all their lives or whether they are recent arrivals from other States or other countries—that Port Hedland has asked everybody to stay his hand while the town sorts out its [cyclone] *problems.*
Editorial, *The West Australian*, p. 6, Wednesday December 10, 1975

When I first came to this part of town–the centre of town, with the harbour–a ship was coming in, and it just made my heart flutter. The ships look like they're coming down the main street. And at night-time, they're so majestic…I mean, they're all carriers, which aren't the most good-looking ship (compared to a cruise ship), but out on the water at night, they're just majestic. Lit up like Christmas trees, with the tug-boats bobbing around them in the water.
Raelene Talbot (Port Hedland Historical Society) interview 21 July 2009

In the Pilbara, it doesn't matter whether you're a cleaner or a BHP worker–everyone treats everyone the same. It's really quite unique, and Port Hedland especially…up here it doesn't matter who you are, what your rank is; everyone treats everyone equally.

We joke about the red dust; how you have to roll in it and you'll miss it when you're gone.
Tina Chinery, (WA Country Health Services, Pilbara Regional Office) Interview of 17 July 2009

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Signed……

Karen Fouweather

Dated…….

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I remain in awe of the number of enthusiastic contributors to this project. The cyclone experiences of many of them could never be surpassed by a work of fiction and so real-life people appear in these pages alongside the fictional characters, who are, in turn, inspired by people I met or read about during my journey. Barry Godley served as Headmaster of Cooke Point Primary School from 1976 until 1978. Tina Moone taught at the school from 1972 until 1979 and June Van Uden from 1972 until its closure in 1997. June and her husband John never found a reason to leave the town and live there today. The experiences and insights of other Hedland residents, past and present, including Stan Martin, Arnold Carter, Kelly Howlett, Julie Hunt, Raelene Talbot, Tina Chinery, Serge Doumergue and Matt and Jackie Farmer preface many of these chapters. The insights of 'local treasure' Merv Stanton, together with his extensive collection of photographs, vividly brought Port Hedland of the 1970's to life. John Van Uden patiently answered all of my questions about the town during this decade, however obscure. Whilst a work of fiction, this project incorporates the insights, either directly or indirectly, of every person who so kindly contributed.

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Chapter One: Cyclone Watch

The satellite photograph received on the morning of 1 December showed that significant organization had occurred in the cloud mass during the previous 24 hours. The spiral cloud-banding characteristic of tropical cyclones was quite evident. On this basis Darwin Tropical Cyclone Warning Centre issued the first Tropical Cyclone Warning on 0915 and named the developing cyclone Joan. It was then located about 310 km west-northwest of Darwin. Joan's movement in the following 48 hours was towards the southwest at an average 5km/h. The cyclone's generally west-southwesterly track after 2 December took it away from the coast until 900 6 December when it was about 420 km north of Port Hedland.
Cyclone Joan: A report by Staff of the Regional Office, Bureau of Meteorology, Perth, p. 5, July 1979

5.55pm, Saturday 6th December 1975
73A Crawford Street, Port Hedland

'I can't eat this facking rubbish!' Dad gives his plate a shove, sends it skidding across the table. It seems to slow at the edge, hanging for a moment as though considering its options, before tipping to splatter obscenely on the lino floor. The kids sit quite still. Mum is the first to move as always, scurrying over to scrape up the mess. Jodie's mouth tastes hot and metallic and her spine prickles. She looks down at her mother, fingers covered in gravy slop as she scoops the remains of the Shepherd's Pie back onto the plate. Her hands are shaking and she keeps her face turned away. Pablo, the family's pet Chihuahua, patters over, starts to lap at the mess on the floor. Mum ineffectively shoos him away but he growls and holds his ground. Ian, the youngest, is trying not to cry. The radio is still on in the background. The cacophony is all too much for Dad. His face contorts and he puts both hands to the back of his head, scratches violently. They know this gesture well and shrink down in their chairs. Mum stands up with the plate, her face tight and her eyes downcast but Jodie sees her eyelashes glinting. She turns towards the kitchen, but her blurry vision lets her down and she slips on the remaining mess on the floor. Mum falls stiffly and hits the floor hard, jarring her coccyx. The pain and humiliation are too much to be contained in her small frame and she sobs.

Jodie, the middle child, sits ramrod straight in her chair, her heart pounding. Her siblings, Ian and Rachel, are suddenly quiet. Grown-ups *never* slip over as kids do, they just don't. A kid would not hit the ground that hard. And they had never heard their mother cry like this, as

though something inside had broken. Instinctively, they turn to the only other adult in the room for help, needing him to fix this and make everything right again. Dad feels their gaze but rejects it, for they are asking for something he no longer has. He looks over at his wife, sees her pathetic and broken and wonders how it came to this. The darkness in his head boils up again, trying to swallow him alive. His fingers scrabble again at the back of his head, but he's never able to reach it, to tear out the rage and fling it away.

'Aaah….silly bloody woman…' he pushes back his chair, as though to shamble over to her.

Her mother flinches at these words, as though physically struck. Something inside Jodie breaks. *How dare he!* Her mother, lying there all broken. Mum was *not* a Silly Woman. *No more!*

'LEAVE HER ALONE!' Jodie's voice is too loud, torn from her throat of its own accord. The room is completely still, all eyes on her. When she speaks again, her voice is hoarse. 'Why don't you just leave us all alone? All you ever do is make us miserable!'

Dad draws his anger in and lets it boil. He can't believe what he's hearing. He knows only one way to deal with this. Jodie knows what is coming and wishes she could stop herself from flinching. He always uses an open hand (which is allowed, just as long as he doesn't use his fist) but a slap from Dad feels like being hit by a piece of metal. Fear and adrenalin course through her small frame, and she shakes all over…but just this once, she does not move. She's on new ground now, making it up as she goes along. Everything washes out to black and white.

'Go on then—hit me! Do it!' Her voice is not as loud, but is strong still. 'I'll go to the police! I'll—I'll tell Mr Godley!' Invoking the name of her indestructible school principal gives her strength. He is everything a grown-up should be. Perhaps everything a Dad should be.

The hand goes no further. Dad holds his arm up for a few seconds, undecided. The girl locks defiant eyes with her father, but what she sees unsettles her. Not anger in those pale blue eyes, but confusion and, of all things, fear. He lowers his eyes, then his arm, struggles inwardly for long seconds. The hand curls into a fist, shakes. Jodie thinks, Now I've really done it, he's going to put me in the hospital this time. She is past caring now, feeling only a kind of relief that, on some level, things must finally change in this family. Her stomach lurches and she flinches, but the fist smashes into the asbestos wall above her head. Grey flakes flick outwards

as Dad's forearm sinks into the thin fibre cement panel, hitting wooden resistance. He withdraws his arm, the limb dusty and bleeding about the knuckles. He doesn't even glance at it.

Jodie recoils as her father reaches down and clasps her wrist, his uninjured hand curling into a fist around her tiny limb. Her heart thumps and she is sure he must be able to hear it. The pressure increases until her hand goes numb and she feels it must snap, like one of those salty pretzel sticks you get at parties.

'I'm leaving.' The words are flat, coming from a distance. He releases her, turns towards the bedroom. In the moments that follow, she hears a suitcase being dragged out from under the bed.

Jodie slumps, exhausted. She flexes her fingers involuntarily, the returning blood making her hand prickle. She feels no relief, for this battle is too dark. But if he were to leave…surely it would be better than this?

The next attack comes from a quarter she has no defence against. 'What have you done?' Mum's voice is deafening in the quiet room, the stricken tone terrifying. 'For God's sake, how *could* you?'

Jodie turns to her mother, who pulls herself to her feet. She wants to go to her, needing some level of comfort, of reassurance…but the expression on her mother's face is frightening. Mum stands, a little tipsily, her tearstained face tight with anger. She turns away from her daughter abruptly, calls her husband's name.

It is too much. Jodie has nothing left. She's out the front door and running towards the beach before conscious thought intervenes. Behind her, the heavy screen door bangs shut. She hears crying, but it could be her mother or her siblings or herself. She doesn't remember.

***

Jodie is halfway out on the reef before real time catches up with her. She comes back to herself with a jolt, all of her focus instinctively directed to her foot. It's about to place her weight upon slippery brown rock and she hesitates, checking carefully before continuing. Safe. Good. Step. Her weight safely balanced, she looks up, towards the open sea. It flecks brown and white at the edge of the reef, seething at the barrier. Still half a mile away, maybe…so at least an hour until the tide turns. She looks back towards the beach, only fifty feet away, but walking this reef

requires care and patience. The girl is relieved she got this far safely. Her mind had simply taken over her body and ran.

She finds herself slowly uncoiling in this eye of the storm into which she has fled. Here the real world is far away. Her eyes feel hot and sore and she rubs them, but her fingertips come away dry. Jodie can't remember crying. She nudges the memory, but the voice in her mind that is always there when she needs it is comforting yet firm. *Not quite yet. Give me a bit of time, kid.* Jodie shrugs. Sure. I've got nowhere else to be.

Jodie considers going out further, but instead heads back to the shore, one careful step at a time. She is rarely here by herself and is not ready for walking the reef solo, not today. She runs through the drill, finding comfort in its familiarity. *No looking around while you step, do that only when your weight is balanced.* Wading in the rock pools was not something she was keen to do either, although lots of kids did. It seemed like a dangerous thing to do, and worse, Jodie considered it trespassing. She thought of each pool as home to living things that would be terrified by invading human feet, all fleshy and white. No wonder people got themselves bitten and stung. Every so often, she eyes the sea; it hates being penned out and, when it turns, you have less time than you thought possible.

Most of the Port Hedland coast was set along tidal flats, producing beaches that were nothing like the ones in Perth. At low tide, sweeping expanses of reef were exposed, but they were not at all like the Great Barrier Reef, either. Hedland reefs were at first brown and rocky, and home to fascinating but potentially deadly marine life including blue-ringed octopuses, stone fish, cone shells and bluebottles. When the tide was in, there were sharks and sea snakes to be wary of. But the clear waters were also home to delightful Flatback turtles, graceful rays and cow-like dugongs. Jodie thought it was perfectly balanced.

You didn't swim here, that was what the pool was for. There was no Surf Club or lifeguards to keep you safe. You could swim at Pretty Pool, but that was much further up, at Cooke Point, and even there it was better to keep an eye out. You could stay out of the water, but the sand was not pure or white. Depending on the time of day, it ranged from pale coffee along Cemetery Beach through to ochre out on Spoil Bank and all shades of brown in between along Pretty Pool, where mangroves set out roots along the mudflats like woody fingers. Grandad Martin had photos of the beach down at the harbour taken in the 1960's and the sand was sparkling white, as it was up in Broome. He said the colours came from dredging the inlet to let

the ore carriers through, together with the nearby ore stockpiles which blasted the town red every time a cyclone came through. The blows also piled up seaweed along the beaches which stank to high heaven for weeks. Then there were the sand flies that bit you, leaving tiny red marks that itched unbearably until you gave in and scratched and scratched them, bringing out see-through yellow blisters that bled clear fluid.

You hardly ever saw grown-ups down here; it was mainly European families who picked squid, octopus and crabs off the reef for dinner. This was probably just as well, as the Mums would have a fit if they knew how many dangerous creatures lived down here. Jodie's teacher, Miss Moone, called the beach *brown and horrible* and never went near it, even though she lived only walking distance away, on Morgans Street. Headmaster Barry Godley was the only exception; he jogged down here four times a week after school, the ageing sun gleaming on his smooth brown skin. The kids went quiet as he passed and he would nod at them *Evening kids* and never slow his pace.

It was her neighbour, Grandad Martin, who told Jodie about the three sets of reefs, which, once pointed out, were perfectly obvious. The first band was the mud and rock and shallow pools that kept out most of the adults and anyone lacking imagination. The second lay beyond the first and housed the deep rock pools full of wayward fish, sea cucumbers and octopus, good for hours of watching. You could only get out to the third band a few times a month, on a low tide of about three feet or less, and you had to make sure you allowed enough time to get back or you could get cut off and have to wade in a swell (*damn* dangerous). This was where the colours were, the impossible and magical marine flower gardens with corals of yellow and bright orange and purple. Cowrie shells were prized for their delicate pattern and varnished appearance, but they were meant to be seen in the water, where the mantle of the mysterious animal stuck out as tiny waving tentacles extending around the entire shell. The third band was also home to timid blue-tinged lobsters, starfish in rainbow colours and delicately patterned cone shells armed with tiny harpoons that shot poison. Shells and skeletons found back on the beach were *alive* here, just as they were supposed to be, and the world in which they lived was breathtaking.[1]

[1]Sutherland Street resident Serge Doumergue talked enthusiastically about the unique coastal environment of Port Hedland, noting, 'I can walk down to the beach from my house [where] you can catch mud crabs, sand crabs, squid, cuttlefish, squid… We still have stone fish, blue-ringed octopus, even stingers at certain times of the year. As long as you are well aware of it, you can take precautions… On a very low tide, we have *three* sets of reefs that are exposed. So you've got…shells, one hundred metres off the coast that are two foot long you can walk to; that are still alive. And there's coral out there, lobsters…it's magnificent' [Interview of 14 July, 2010].

Jodie's foot tests a wobbly green-skimmed rock at the edge of a deep pool, and a flash of pulsing colour *orange, deep blue, turquoise* shoots out, desperately seeking fresh haven. She sucks her breath in sharply and leans over the pool, memorizing the display until the red-gold reflection of the dying sun hides it from view. The blue-ringed octopus was the most beautiful creature she'd ever seen. Jodie didn't really mind that it was deadly—it had to be, to survive here. There were plenty of octopuses on the reef; they squirted indignantly at you as you tried to pass and the girls went *Ewww* and the boys tried to catch them. But the blue-ringed was rare and shy, and Jodie thought herself lucky to have seen it.

The stonefish was also rare—Jodie had only ever seen two—but thankfully so. The ugliest of the reef's inhabitants was hands down the most dangerous to reef walkers, because it was so easy to step on. They squatted in dregs of water at low tide, their spines storing enough poison supposedly to kill a kid in three minutes. Once you'd seen one for yourself, stonefish weren't that hard to spot. Jodie had squatted down and studied the first one she saw. She decided he reminded her of a portly yet prickly gentleman minding his own business whilst waiting patiently for the sea to return. No sinister motives at all, that she could see. You were quite safe, as long as you watched where you put your foot when walking out here. Last year, a Dutch boy from school had forgotten to be careful and trodden on one. He was away from school for six weeks and Miss Moone told the class it had been a Close Thing. Tonia Pellegrini's Mum worked with the family's neighbour in the school canteen and found out that Alto De Witt's heart had stopped beating—twice— whilst in Emergency. After that, a lady from the Department of Health came out and addressed the entire school, class by class in the library, about the dangers of local marine life. She recommended that all children wore closed-in shoes whilst at the beach. (As most of the students at Cooke Point Primary did not even own a pair of closed-in shoes, that was unlikely to happen). There had been a slide show, entitled *Dangerous Marine Life of the Pilbara Coast*, but the drawings and photos were flat and the colours did not do them justice. Courtney Rhodes put her hand up and asked, *What do you do if you do get bitten or stung down the beach anyway?* And the lady told her to *Rest on the sand while a friend runs off to get help.* Jodie's best friend Jackie whispered that she hoped it was a very *fast* friend you were with if this actually happened.

Jodie giggles at the memory and it feels odd, as though the smiley muscles in her face had forgotten how to work. Her body had been right to bring her here, to a place that most

grown-ups did not *get.* She continues her careful path, her strawberry blonde hair set alight by a dying sun, rapidly cooling to match the ochre sand. This time of day was always the kindest. Jodie had white-blonde eyelashes that were so fair that her eyes seemed to disappear when she slept. Similarly, her eyebrows were all but invisible, framing pale blue eyes. The girl's genetic makeup was designed for a sun half a world away. Here, Jodie's skin repeatedly freckled and blistered. Over time, the sun darkened its intended ivory hue, but at best her body could take on only a pale honey or pinkish tone, depending on the light. Of course, this small ascension to the harsh climate was attributed by her little brother to ground-in iron ore dust, or possibly to her freckles joining up.

The girl resembled none of her family in appearance, all of whom had been issued with British stock-standard blue eyes and brown hair, together with fair skin that darkened under the southern sun without too much persuasion. Mum diagnosed her colouring as a genetic throwback and mentioned Great Aunty Joyce from West Glamorgan in Wales, who was Dad's mother's sister. Jodie was more concerned about the inconvenience and discomfort of getting sunburnt all the time. When the family arrived in Fremantle seven years ago, Mum painstakingly applied zinc cream on a daily basis and dispensed hats to her children, but over time they became impractical. The kids grew older and decided *that stuff made you look like a dork.* She gave up eventually, forced to watch all of her children, but especially her comparatively albino daughter, painfully attempt to acquire a hue to match the local kids.

Jodie's toes touch hard packed sand and she steps lightly off the sharp rock. Once a kid had lived here for more than a month, shoes—even thongs or sandals—were regarded as a hindrance reserved for school. Dad tells his kids they'll all end up with ugly splayed toes like the Abos on the outskirts of town, them in their tin humpies. Jodie's stomach lurches a little as she remembers her Dad, remembers that she has to go home sometime. The calm bestowed by this place ebbs a little.

The girl trudges back up the beach, tasting metal in the warm, salty wind. The sun is an open wound now, setting behind Spoil Bank before a foaming mass of enraged ocean.

A storm is coming.

Chapter Two: Blue Alert—Get Ready

Cyclone Joan's track was quite typical if it is compared with the track of all other cyclones that have affected this region. Nevertheless, it is unusual for an early season cyclone generated in the eastern part of the Timor Sea to move so far westward before turning to cross the coast.
Cyclone Joan: A report by Staff of the Regional Office, Bureau of Meteorology, Perth, p. 10, July 1979

Jodie reaches the road and realizes she can't go home yet. Maybe not ever. She decides not to think about this too much and instead turns left up Sutherland Street, away from home. Her pace increases of its own accord until her bare feet pound the tarmac, carrying her into Mosely Street. Towards the end of the ring road, she slows to a walk, sucking in warm salty air. She gives herself a few moments to calm her ragged breathing, then walks up the cracked bitumen driveway of her best friend's house. The house is a 1960's steel-framed and sheet tin building, stained red like its neighbours. Jodie is used to living in a duplex with the rest of her family and thinks it is huge.

She turns the rasping metal key that serves as a doorbell and Jackie's mum answers. Mrs Cross seems surprised to see her, but only for a moment, then she ushers Jodie in. The family is having dinner around the small veneer-topped table and stop eating at the sight of their visitor. Jodie feels all their eyes on her and her toes curl inwards. She decides that this was not the best idea. Then her best friend Jackie vaults off her chair and is beside her in two bounds, wrapping her in a gangly hug. Jackie is all long limbs and tangled hair, like an adolescent puppy.

'Jodie! Watcha doin' here?'

Jodie had not thought to prepare her answer and now Jackie's words hang in the air. Sure, she would tell her every detail later, but not in front of Jackie's *parents.* That stuff was private. It would be…*airing your dirty laundry in public,* as her mother always said.

'Would yer like some dinner then, dear? We've only just started and there's plenty, so it's no trouble.' Lorraine Cross is all bustling practicality, ploughing through the girl's discomfiture. Jodie is surprised when her stomach urges her to accept, reminding her of an abandoned dinner a long time ago. She nods gratefully and perches on top of a stool placed next to her best friend, as a plate is set in front of her. Jodie works her way through a plate of lamb chops with mashed potatoes and peas while the family resumes catching up with Mr Cross's day. Ernie Cross is a carpenter working on the new housing development in South Hedland and he's

lamenting about what he refers to as 'The ludicrous Radburn Cell System'. He says it was designed by a lady in Canberra—*in bloody Canberra!*—and has a bit of a rant about all these lovely footpaths and laneways where residents are supposed to go for a walk.

'But 'climate here is very different to Canberra, int' it?' he points at Dennis, the oldest, with his fork. Dennis grunts in agreement through a mouthful and keeps shovelling. 'In Canberra, alt' young mums can put their babies int' pushchairs and go for a walk all year 'round—'

'Prams, Dad—they say prams in Australia.' Jackie is committed to acclimatizing her father to Australian culture. Jodie gawks. She could never speak to her own Dad like that. She returns her attention to Mr Cross—she loves hearing them talk. Their accents remind her of Nana, whose broad West Yorkshire dialect often required translation for the benefit of the locals during her visits. As girls, Jodie's Mum and her sister had both won scholarships to Wakefield Grammar school, an honour which their mother decided required elocution lessons if her daughters were really going to make something of themselves. That was why Jodie's Mum spoke perfect English that was curiously devoid of any accent, British *or* Australian. Jodie's Dad spent years overseas in the merchant navy from the age of sixteen and had all but purged his own brogue, which only showed when he was really angry. *Facking idiots.* Jodie shivers, pushing his voice out of her mind.

Nathan, Jackie's little brother and the youngest of the Cross kids, is using his fork to circumnavigate an island of round little bones with his peas. He's eaten up his lamb chops first and is now stuck with the boring stuff.

'Prams, then, whatever.' Mr Cross brushes aside the interruption, continues. He is unstoppable once he gets going. 'Anyway, over here we have all these young mums wi' little babies what live out there, and you've also got this brand new flash shopping centre—second largest in the state outside of Perth, no less. Beautiful! *But* (and here's the rub), no one in their right mind is going to load 'little ones into their pushchairs and walk t'shops two mile away when it's *one hundred and ten degrees in the shade,* are they?! You're going to get in your car and drive the ten miles to get there!'

Mrs Cross tells Nathan to *Eat your peas or you're not getting any dessert*! Nathan sulks.

'It's no way a ten mile drive to the shopping centre out there, is it Dad? It's hardly that far to drive to Hedland!' Dennis dislikes exaggeration and likes to get all the facts straight. His mother has him pegged as a future lawyer.

'Ah well—there again is your problem with the place!' Mrs Cross casts her eyes to the ceiling, sighing. He's off, again. 'They've got these...*semi-circular* street layouts and they're alt' closed off ont' one side. So you can *see* where you want to go, but to get there you 'ave to drive 'round and 'round 'til you're dizzy. So...it's all back to front and arse about. Even the houses are 'wrong way 'round: the backyard's in the front and the front's out the back. So you're hanging out your washing overlooking the street. Anyone nicking anything—and theft is rife over there—they just have to jump 'fence, while 'police are left to drive around in circles. It's daft. It'll take 'em *decades* to fix it, and here we are, still building it! The main problem with South Hedland is that *it's designed by people who don't bloody live 'ere*!' Mr Cross jams his fork handle into the table for emphasis and Jodie jumps in her seat.

'That's enough now, dear.' Mrs Cross has seen their small guest's discomfiture and frowns at her husband. She gestures for everyone to pass their empty plates over. Mr Cross is not quite done, but he changes his tone.

'Ey, we 'ad a bloke stopped today wanting directions. He were quite lost. He comes up to our gang, says How do I get to Boronia Close? Well, Gerald, you know, 'supervisor, he says, 'Tell yer what mate, we'll give yer directions, and if yer get there first try, you can go ter' Council Offices and they'll give you a booby prize!'[2]

This cracks them all up, until Mrs Cross ushers the kids into the kitchen to help themselves to dessert. Nathan says, *Home-made apple pie, yummy,* and can't decide between ice-cream or custard so Dennis says, *Have both then but hurry up and get out of the bloody way I'm going out*. His mother tells him off for swearing and threatens to confiscate his dessert. Dennis makes stabbing motions behind his little brother's head with his fork, until Mrs Cross forcibly evicts them both from the kitchen, shoving bowls of pie after them. Jodie swims in the normality of this noisy family, soaking up their camaraderie and pretending *wishing* she was a Cross kid, too.

[2] The problematic design of the South Hedland district continues to rankle with locals into the present day. This anecdote was one of many from an interview with long-term locals, John and June Van Uden, on 19 July, 2009 which helped me immensely in portraying the town during the 1970's.

The phone rings and Mrs Cross goes to answer it. She nods, murmuring a few words, gestures to Jodie. She holds the phone to her chest, tells her, 'It's yer Mum. She wants a word.'

Jodie glances out of the window. It is almost full dark outside and the wind still hasn't died down. She balances relief with dread at taking the call. Mrs Cross gently grasps her shoulder and says, 'You can sleep over if you like, dear. We always 'ave a spare toothbrush and you can borrow one of Jackie's nighties.'

Heartened by this comforting option, Jodie takes the phone, croaks *Hello?* into the receiver.

'It's Mum.' The familiar voice stretches down the line from another world away. Jodie can detect neither warmth nor anger in her tone, making it worse. The girl's spine prickles and tears well hot at the edges of her eyes.

'Is he gone?' It is the wrong thing, the worst thing to say, but the words fall out. There is a long pause, stretching across a block and hundreds of miles away.

'Your Dad packed his case, sat in the car for a while, then came back inside. He's watching the news.' Jodie cannot tell if her mother is relieved or saddened by this inaction. Her voice sounds dead.

'Are you…okay?' Jodie's voice breaks a little and a single tear plops onto the lino floor.

'I'm fine. Would you like me to come and get you?' she is Auto-mum again, all duty and efficiency.

'I'd...rather stay here tonight. Mrs Cross says I can borrow Jackie's stuff.'

There is a pause, as though her mother has more to say. She settles for, 'That's fine. Probably for the better. It is Saturday, after all. Jackie must come and stay with us next time.'

Jodie passes the phone back to Mrs Cross, unable to meet her kindly eyes. Next time. He didn't even back out of the driveway. *So much for things changing.* Mum was, as usual, pretending everything was fine. Just fine. Angrily, she rubs her eye with the palm of her hand. Not even worth crying over.

In the living room, the rest of the family is positioned around the telly, even Dennis, who is on his way out to a mate's place. **TROPICAL CYCLONE JOAN UPDATE** is plastered across the bottom of the screen. The weather lady is armed with one of those pointy stick things and emphatically taps the map of Western Australia. She aims at a bunch of wavy concentric shapes scrawled off the coast between Broome and Port Hedland that are a near match to the

pattern of her dress. As the pointer moves away, Jodie sees a buzz-saw blade shape in the middle of the pattern, labeled TC JOAN.

Mr Cross has been keeping tabs on the cyclone since it formed. *Following the bomb*, he calls it. He gestures at Dennis to turn up the volume, who leans forward and twiddles the knob clock-wise: '—unusual for an early season cyclone to move so far westward before turning to cross the coast. A Cyclone Warning has now been reinstated after Tropical Cyclone Joan took an unexpected and abrupt southerly turn. If she maintains a southerly track, Joan is expected to make landfall within the next 36 hours. The Bureau of Meteorology will continue to monitor the cyclone using radar and satellite technology. Residents in the Port Hedland and surrounding districts are urged to monitor local radio and television channels for regular Cyclone warnings.'

The weather lady disappears and the screen reverts to a black and white Doctor Who. He's waving his sonic screwdriver at a nearby Dalek. The Doctor has white hair and wears a velvet jacket with frilly white cuffs at the sleeves. Jodie likes Dr Who because of the cool baddies and the way it is sometimes really scary, but it would be so much better if he was a bit *younger* and not a rather weird old man. Right now, the Doctor is getting ignored.

'Crikey, we'd all chalked that one off—Joan were blowing herself off t'Cocos Islands twelve hours ago.' Jackie's Dad leans back in his chair, rubs his forehead.

'Can Jodie still sleep-over?' Jackie has her priorities clear.

'Hey, if the cyclone hits by Monday, we won't have to go to school!' exclaimed Nathan. Like his big sister, he has his priorities straight. His mother tells him to *Watch Doctor Who or miss out before bed*, then instructs her daughter to find toothbrush and nightie for Jodie before showering. Dennis salutes his goodbyes and bangs the screen door shut.

Jodie was about to follow her friend down the hallway when Mr Cross stops her short, gently grasps her shoulder. She freezes. His voice is quiet, his expression grave.

''Ey, that's quite the bracelet you're wearing, love.' Jodie looks down almost guiltily, her insides lurching a little as she sees the blue and purple prints around her wrist. The marks stand out vividly against her pale skin and she wonders that she did not notice them until now.

'Want me to 'ave a word with your Dad, love?' His gentle words are forged in good intent but edged with steel. They explode around her like little bombs going off. Her parents would *never* forgive her. Jodie backs away, hoping she can say the right things and praying she won't cry again. She doesn't understand why she is such a crybaby today.

‘Oh no, thank you, Mr Cross. Dad is always saying how I bruise too easily, I’m so pale. I’m okay, really. I’m tired now, thank you for letting me stay. Good night.’ The words tumble out in babble.

Mr Cross’s mouth tightens so much that his lips disappear, but he manages to force a smile. ‘You’re welcome. Goodnight—and I’ll be keeping an eye out for you, lass. That’s a promise and not a threat.’ He turns back to the telly, snorts and exhales some more words to no one in particular. Jodie does not hang about to listen.

After a prolonged and noisy shower, during which Mrs Cross rapped on the door and warned them that, *if you manage to flood ’hallway, you’ll both be sleeping int’ garden shed*, Jodie perches on her friend’s bed. For a moment she examines her friend’s initials printed on the label of her borrowed nightie, then pulls it on over her head. It smells flowery, but not quite as nice as her Mum’s clean laundry.

‘You know how we both have the same initials?’ It was one of the first things discovered in common after they were seated together in Miss Moone’s class. They also both had parents who were Ten Pound Poms and liked eating Milo straight out of the tin. Jackie was a latecomer, a blow-in during week three of term one. Her Dad was in town looking for work. She had told Jodie by way of introduction that they could be gone by lunchtime if it didn’t work out.

‘I thought of someone else with the same initials, too.’ Jodie looks thoughtful and speaks slowly.

‘Oh, yeah?’

‘Uh-huh.’

Jackie flops down on the bed, working her brush through her thick dark blonde hair, the colour of sand and spinifex. Jodie envies that hair, that skin, able to darken to honey so easily. She reckons her best friend could fit in, blend in anywhere. Jackie nods back at her, gestures encouragingly with her hairbrush. ‘Go on, then.’

‘Well…Jodie Cadogan,’ she points at herself. ‘Jackie Cross,’ this time nodding at her friend, who giggles, rolling her eyeballs and twirling her finger in a winding-up signal. ‘And Joan….Cyclone!’ Jackie groans and chucks a pillow at her. This starts a Tickle-Pillow Fight that continues until Jackie’s Mum raps on the door, telling them to *Quiet down, Ladies, or take yer pillows and go sleep int’ shed—immediately!*

The girls sleep top-and-tails in Jackie's bed and talk furtively into the night, their low voices muffled by the steady hum of the refrigerated air conditioning unit outside. Jackie's father keeps it on all night, every night in the summer. Jackie says that sometimes you actually have to pull the sheets up because you get cold in bed. Even that is kind of nice because a caravan doesn't have air-conditioning and it is either too hot or too cold almost all of the time.

Ernie Cross's job as a team supervisor working on the housing development in South Hedland happened almost by accident. The family was just passing through the town, on their way to the Top End to explore the Territory. They pulled into town for lunch and petrol and a quick look around. As they ate fish and chips from the diner on Wedge Street, Ernie was captivated by the sight of a huge ore carrier docking at the wharf. It was so close that it seemed to be about to glide down the main street. Declaring that this was not a sight you see every day, the family spent the night in the Caravan Park and Ernie was out looking for work the next day. By sunset the day after that, the Cross family caravan was up on blocks in the back yard of their new rental, with the rust-brown-red Landrover rested up in the carport. Until the work ran out, or Ernie grew restless once more.

Jodie tells Jackie all about her run-in with her Dad that evening about a hundred years ago. Jackie is a great listener. She says, *No way!* and *You're kidding me!* a lot. There's not a lot else to say about it.

They play Things They Have In Common and, as usual, the list is long. Books take up a fair bit of space, for they share a love of reading, especially fantasy and adventure books. They love the *Narnia Chronicles, Famous Five* books, and the W*rinkle in Time* series by Madeleine L'Engle. Their friendship really started in the school library when they were both caught in the Senior section (reserved for Grades Six and Seven) huddled over Anne McCaffrey's *Dragonsong*. Miss Rubenstein, the school's librarian, was notoriously grumpy and sent them straight to Barry Godley himself. The girls were scared stiff, but he listened carefully before politely asking them why they wanted to read the senior books. He didn't look particularly angry, so Jackie boldly told him *because the stories are more interesting* and Jodie added *and we've read all the books in the middle* section. Mr Godley then sat back in his chair and was quiet for a minute or two. Then he took out a pad and a pen with the Cooke Point Primary School shark emblem embossed on it and carefully wrote out a paragraph. He tore out the page, folded it once and put it in an envelope he addressed to Mrs Rubenstein, which he asked them to

deliver. They were about to leave when the Principal called them back and gave them each a CPPS shark logo pen. Mrs Rubenstein didn't seem too pleased when she read the note, but, after that, they were allowed in any section of the library and could read and borrow whatever they wanted.

Neither girl owns many books, because they seem to be on the move so often and possessions are constantly culled. Jodie is still heartbroken by the loss of a whole crate of books en route from Bunbury to Port Hedland. They included the entire *Famous Five* and *Secret Seven* series by Enid Blyton that had taken *years* to complete. The moving company didn't even pay out on the insurance claim because they decided that the contents of the missing crate were of 'negligible value'. Nowadays, the girls have swapped every single one of each other's books at least once and read and re-read them all.

Their Things In Common list moves on to the category they have named 'Badass Pets', because both of the girls have one in their family. They argue about who would beat who in a fight: the Cadogan family's Pablo the Chihuahua or the Cross family's Dollymix the Cat. They decide it would end up being a Fight to the Death and rule it a draw, although the cat wins the Stupidest Name Award.

'He's named after Mum's favourite lollies—sorry, *sweets*—back 'ome int' England.' Jackie can turn on a broad Yorkshire accent effortlessly. 'No wonder he wants to kill everyone. I would, too, with a name like that.'

'Mum says that "Pablo" means "Paul" in Mexican, which means "Little One", so it fits, I guess.' Jodie has heard that many times.

'I wonder how you say "Little Badass One" in Mexican, 'cause that would fit better!' Jackie starts them both off, again.

'I'm really glad I'm here and not…home.' Jodie says as, their giggling and talk slows to a sleepy trickle.

'So am I. This is fun.' Jackie swallows a yawn.

'I wish I lived with you and your family. I wish you were my sister. Yep, honest! And—I'm not sorry to say this, even if it is wrong—I wish I had your Dad, instead of mine.'

'No, you don't. You really don't.' Jackie reminds her that she has gone to over a dozen schools in three states in the past two-and-a-half years and she was still only eleven years old. She seldom had chance to make friends before it was time to move on again and it was no fun

always being the New Kid, even if she did have siblings to sit with at recess and lunchtime when no one else would. Jodie could not come even close, having managed only four schools in three years, all in the same state (including the same school, twice) and all port towns, because of her Dad's work.

'That's something else we have in common. Tick.' Jodie checks a box in the darkness mid-air with her finger.

'What?'

'We both get dragged around every which way by our Dads after the money.'

Jackie thinks about this for a moment, the fog of sleepiness threatening to envelope her retreating a little. 'Maybe your Dad is following the money, yep. But my Dad…he's different. It's like he *needs* to keep going, or something. Mum reckons he's got gypsy blood in his veins. Can't sit still for long. Gotta keep moving.'

'Mum reckons my Dad never got on with his own Dad, who spent every penny he had as soon as he earned it, and then some, and died poor. Mum said it was a shame my Dad never got on with him. Everyone else loved him because he was so happy and generous.' Jodie has heard her mother try to excuse her husband's unpredictable behaviour many times.

'We should ask them. Find out when we get to stop.' Jackie is matter-of-fact.

'How do we do that?' Jodie rolls over on to elbows, listening. They are in the same year at school together, but Jackie is already eleven because school starts a year earlier in England and she was held back in the Australian system, much to her mother's horror. Sometimes, she just *knows* things.

Jackie giggles. 'Easy. Just say, How far, Ernie? And, How much, Gerald?'

'I don't *think* so!' Jodie imagines her Dad's face.

They take it in turns saying *How far, Ernie* and *How much, Gerald* until they fall asleep. Jodie dreams of houses with their backyards out the front and their front yards out the back and a big blow with her initials on sweeping it all away.

Chapter Three: Redirection

In Port Hedland, yesterday morning's atmosphere of anti-climax when the cyclone appeared to be moving away turned into anxiety when news was received of the change of direction. But there was no panic as residents checked tie-ropes, closed storm shutters and prepared for a long night.
The West Australian, Front page, Monday December 8. 1975

10.30am Sunday 7th December, 1975
73A Crawford Street

Jodie tries the screen door, finds it unlocked. She lets herself in, stops short as she sees her father in his usual chair. Rachel and Ian are lying on the floor, quietly watching *Speed Buggy.* Ian, the youngest, waves at her with two fingers but keeps his eyes on the screen. Rachel, Jodie's older sister, moves onto her side, rolls her eyeballs at Jodie to indicate both the cartoon and their little brother. Usually, Jodie is the one watching cartoons with Ian. They argue about the colour of Speed Buggy: Jodie reckons he is blue and Ian red, but it's a stupid game because they'll never find out, anyway. Now Jodie thinks that Rachel could be waiting for the *Countdown* repeat to come on, but it occurs to her that she could also be reluctant to leave their little brother alone with Dad. Jodie gives her a tiny, maybe grateful smile, hovers for a moment. She is unsure if she should come in or not.

She needn't have worried; Dad is oblivious to her presence. Yesterday has already happened. He's perched in his chair, wandering in his own private world. His hands are at the side of his head again, fingers eternally scrabbling. He's been trying to roll himself a ciggie, but the packet of Drum and his papers are strewn about the floor at his feet. Jodie wonders that he doesn't have bald, raw patches all over his head. His mouth is moving silently, his face contorted as he argues with an unseen opponent. Occasionally, some of it wafts over to the children *It dezzen' matter! Then your numbers are fackin' wrong!* He jabs his finger emphatically at the tormentor in his head. Watching him, Jodie gets a little lurch in her guts.

Jodie's siblings turn back to the flickering black-and-white images. They pretend not to notice their father, a habit born out of long practice. Dad gets up suddenly, paces around. He's still arguing with no one in the room. The cartoon is interrupted by a cyclone update and Ian

groans in annoyance. The buzz saw-shaped blob on the screen is a lot closer to the coast than it was on the news last night. The outermost line of the storm now extends all the way to the coast, touching the letter *P* in *Port Hedland*. Joan was coming, ready or not.

Jodie has had enough and goes into the kitchen. She needs to see, to be with, her mother, but keeps her eyes downcast. She pulls out a kitchen chair and perches, watching Mum sort batteries, count candles and pour blue kero into the lamp. The sense of anti-climax when Joan seemed to be blowing herself out to sea is gone and preparations have ramped back up again. Maybe Joan had no intention of leaving, either, and was only bluffing. Jodie watches her mother without looking, the way Grandad Martin does sometimes when he wants to make sure you are listening. Mum looks and sounds normal most of the time, but Jodie is starting to see that this is no more than a thin layer she shows the world.

The gas bottles and jerry cans are lined up ready to be filled, and Mum had already stocked up on tins of food and cartons of long-life milk in the pantry. Power cuts during a cyclone are never a case of *if*, but *when* and for how long. Jodie looks down at the floor, takes in the navy and gold Toulsen & Associates sports bag with the wavy logo. The top is unzipped and she can see the clothes inside. Next to it is Ian's tatty school bag from last year, with a stained pair of garden gloves on top. Evacuation preparations. The smaller bag is for the dog if need be; you can only pick him up with a pair of gloves on or he'll bite you for sure. Even then, you really have to hang onto him because he snarls and snaps and wriggles so much. Dad reckoned Pablo was baited with a bit of poisoned meat in the backyard down in Bunbury. He had fits on the floor and vomitted everywhere. It was a close call, but when he came through, he had what Mum called a Bad Attitude.

The girl glances out the window, past the red-crusted cyclone wire, past the powder blue LJ Torana parked in the car shelter. The sky looks strange already, tinny light grey when it's always blue. Across the road at the pool, the water looks dark and wrong. They're stacking white plastic chairs and pulling down bunting flags. Jodie wants to run over the road and go for a swim like every other Saturday and forget about all this. But just beyond the pool, the blue flag is wrenching at its fastenings on the roof of the Civic Centre and there's no mistaking it. *Blue Alert: twenty-four hours to go*.

Jodie didn't think any of it mattered, any more. The storm had already been through here. Nobody mentioned it, of course; this family just wasn't like that. *It'll sort itself out.* That was her

mother's favourite saying. Jodie used to find the familiar words comforting, but not anymore. Stick a band-aid on and we'll all limp along like before.

'Did you have a good time at Jackie's house last night?' Her mother tries to keep the conversation as normal as possible. Jodie brushes off the question, shrugs. It's just words.

'It was fine.' She fiddles with the council pamphlet on the table: *Making your home cyclone ready.* 'He's pacing again. Talking to himself.' Jodie is restless, relentless. There's a new distance between them today. They had been allies but yesterday Mum declared in front of all where her loyalty truly lay. Jodie felt betrayed, forever.

Jodie's mother puts the kero bottle down, replaces the cap slowly. Her husband Gerald's job as a marine cargo surveyor meant moving around a lot, and she hadn't had chance to make many close friendships. Not since leaving England, really. She is lonely so often, and Gerald can be so hard to live with. Rightly or wrongly, her middle daughter was all too regularly cast in the role of confidante. Most of the time, Emily all but forgot that her daughter was just ten years old.

Jodie has found new eyes and can see all this for herself. Now she has found her mother wanting, sees her as something less. A victim still, yet a victim by choice and that was something different altogether. Mum stayed because she chose to; perhaps it was easier that way. Maybe it was the same thing.

'Your Dad…' Mum sees her daughter's shoulders stiffen, hesitates. She breathes in and continues. 'Look, he's under a lot of pressure at work at the moment. Working long hours. These Dampier runs are over two hundred miles. And there's been a lot of union activity lately, both at the mine sites and at the port itself. And he's been taking on some freelance work, too, for insurance companies…'

'Why?'

Jodie's question brings her mother up short. 'What do you mean, Why?'

'Why does he work so many hours if it makes him crazy?' Jodie's eyes are clear, her words direct. There is no sign of insubordination, nothing her mother can fairly discipline her for. She stumbles on her words.

'Well…for the money, of course.'

'Are we poor?'

'Of course not.'

'So why does he have to work so much, then?' Jodie remembers her talk with Jackie last night. She wants to ask Mr Cross a similar but different question and the outcome is the same. She wants to make him not take her best friend away. She would say to Jackie's Dad, *Why do you have to keep travelling? What are you looking for? How will you know when you find it?* Maybe neither Dad could even remember. Maybe they didn't know in the first place.

Jodie's mother nibbles at her bottom lip. She had always followed her husband Gerald—halfway across the world to begin with, away from a lifetime of family and friends. Of all the places in her new country (strange she still thought of it that way, after almost a decade), she liked Port Hedland the best. People here were nearly all migrants of a sort: transient and uprooted, just like her, and in this mutual condition they found solidarity. But now… her family seemed to be disintegrating while she stood by and watched. Gerald's *mood swings, his mother called them,* were getting worse. The considerate, softly-spoken man she had once fallen in love with was being swallowed up in his own private hell and it frightened her. Emily stayed on comfortable, safe ground with Gerald, for to mention his *condition* started him off again. *The tide can turn faster than you thought possible and you could get cut off and have to wade in a swell. Damn dangerous.*

Emily realises that her younger daughter has been forced to test her and found her wanting. As both wife and mother, she should have been the one to stand up to Gerald yesterday, should have been brave, like Jodie. Instead, she chose to comply as she always did, terrified at the prospect of yet more flux in her life. Her husband remains her anchor in what she still regards as a new country. Without him, she would be lost and then what would become of her and the children?

Emily regards her brave and complicated daughter, sitting perfectly still and waiting for a response. She is an Old Soul. Grandma Knocking, Gerald's grandmother, held Jodie as a baby, stared into her eyes and said, '*Ey, this one has been around before. Mebbee many times.* Grandma Knocking lived in the top bedroom of a two-storey terraced house with Gerald's parents. When she wanted anything, she rapped sharply on the floor with her cane. Their oldest child, Rachel, gave her the nickname when she was only five, just before they immigrated to Australia.

Now Emily wants to say so much to her middle child, wants to thank her, hug her, tell her she was brave, braver than she, tell her she loved her, that it was okay to be hurting. Instead, she can't even answer her question for she no longer knows the answer.

'How about you go and put the garden hose in the pool and fill it to overflowing. They reckon Joan is going to be a big one and we don't want the pool to blow away.'

Jodie's eyes widen, stricken for a moment…then close up inside. She looks down. When she speaks, her voice is low. 'I will. But first can I go and check on Momoko and Alice?'

Mum nods, goes back to filling the kero lamp. There is nothing more to say.

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Jodie twists the doorbell knob next door, twice. The grating ring summons their neighbour, Momoko Kokkinos. Her pretty face is shadowed by an unaccustomed frown which rapidly dissipates into a happy smile at the sight of her young visitor. Jodie grins back widely—Momoko just has that effect on people. Momoko says, *Haaai—Joh-dee! Konichiwa. Hallow!* Jodie says, *Konichiwa! Hallo, Momoko* right back at her. Jodie should be polite and address her formally as 'Mrs Kokkinos', like all the other adults, but her neighbour doesn't think that is right, for she is barely ten years older than her young friend. Momoko clasps the girl's hand in both of hers, draws her inside. She chatters in Japanese for a few moments and Jodie smiles and nods, enjoying the lyrical flow of the strange language. Momoko is not really supposed to be talking in Japanese because her husband Philippe (who, in Australia, is simply 'Phil' to the adults) wants her to learn English so she can fit in as soon as possible, and the only way to do that is to practice. But Jodie wants to learn Japanese, too, and hopes to go there one day. So they trade words and phrases and giggle conspiratorially as they do so.

Phil and Momoko's little daughter Alice sits on the mat in the living room, playing with oversized jigsaw pieces. She sees Jodie and *squeals*, runs over to her. Jodie cries *Allie!* scoops her up and swings her around. This causes yet more squealing and giggling. They have a noisy tickle fight, then Jodie says *Allie play Daruma with Jodie? Yeah? Go get it!* and the little girl nods excitedly, runs off on a mission. Alice is just two years old, a tiny doll of a child with bright brown eyes and shiny black hair and the most exquisite features Jodie has ever seen. Her father

says she is half-Japanese, half-Greek and all-Australian because this country is her home. Jodie knows she is as smart as a whip and loves her dearly.

The Kokkinos family (pronounced KOKE-in-oss, as Momoko carefully sounded out to Jodie when they first met) live in the duplex next door. Both the A and B of 73 Crawford Street are owned by Toulsen & Associates and house company surveyors and their families. The two homes have identical floor plans—small living room, smaller dining room, even smaller kitchen with three compact bedrooms, laundry/loo and bathroom leading off the hallway, and finished off with lino on the floors throughout. Upon accepting the job with Toulsen's, Jodie's father had flown up before his family (at the firm's expense) to complete the paperwork, tour the firm's operations and inspect the accommodation. The house was provided fully-furnished as part of his salary package, which also included, in these days before the Fringe Benefits Tax, a company car, utilities and petrol allowance on the family car. He had been particularly pleased to note the brand new fridge and twin-tub washing machine installed in the home, news of which he passed onto his wife upon his return to Perth.

Gerald was not so pleased upon arrival in Hedland, as the new white goods had been replaced with an old single tub machine, featuring an austere electric mangle, and GE fridge circa 1950's, complete with noisy motor and rusty hinges. His suspicions were confirmed when he called next door to finalise the duty rosters and noted a new fridge and washing machine closely resembling the ones he recalled seeing in his own home. The swindle was made worse by the fact that Terry Barnett lived by himself. Terry's Singaporean wife got off the plane, took one look at the Port Hedland airport, and got straight back on the plane again. She refused to disembark, much less live there. Instead, Terry paid the rent on her apartment in South Perth and ate at the Seaman's 'Mish' or the pub opposite the airport. He rarely seemed to be home. Jodie's parents doubted that Terry would have greater need for a new twin tub or fridge than a family of five with young children, and Gerald resolved to reclaim the contraband items the minute Terry left.

The situation had almost came to a head when, six weeks after arrival, Jodie played chicken with Ian, taking it in turns to touch the churning electric mangle while it was turned on. She lost and had her arm sucked through clean up to the elbow, until it snapped like a twig. Emily responded to the children's screams and found her daughter's white arm hanging grotesquely, the mangle mechanically chewing away on the rest of the limb. Gerald's rage was

instantaneous; he paused only to shut off the mangle and free Jodie's arm before he was next door hammering on the screen door. Fortunately, Terry was not at home at the time. Emily managed to convince her husband that getting their daughter to hospital was a greater priority than ripping the screen door off its hinges, smashing the door down and manhandling both twin tub and fridge back home, as he had intended. Gerald had muttered away to himself and scratched his head all the way to hospital. Once the initial shock had worn off and her arm had been attended to, Jodie was relieved to find out that the accident was not her fault, after all, but that Facking Selfish Bastard next door.

The matter was resolved once and for all soon afterwards. Jodie still had her plaster on when Terry's habit of calling into the 'Nade (The Esplanade Hotel, a popular Hedland watering hole) after the initial survey for a quiet one or two (or four or five) proved to be his undoing, when he bumped into Mr Toulsen Snr, entertaining clients at the establishment. His subsequent rapid departure from the firm was great news to Gerald. However, his self-righteous intentions regarding repossession of the contraband white goods came undone when he found out that their new neighbours included a young mother with a toddler. He did not have the heart to swap them back, after all, and they remained at 73A for good.

Now the interior of 73A is magically different from its twin, as Momoko has transplanted a little bit of Japan into the living room. She acquiesced with her husband regarding their daughter's Australian education, but on one point she was absolutely firm: Alice would grow up knowing where she had come from. Consequently, delicate blinds of *shoji* rice paper decorated with cherry blossom adorn the windows, obscuring the rusty cyclone wire screens. In the centre of the room perches a low *Kotatsu* table, with four big floor cushions set around it. Jodie thought it was a lot more fun to play games around this conveniently kid-sized table. A waving *Maneki Neko*, the lucky cat, keeps watch over Alice atop a shelf set on the wall; Jodie could never figure out how his right paw never stopped waving. Momoko once laughingly brought him down for the girl to look at, to prove that he didn't have any batteries or concealed wind-up device. Jodie had turned the solid golden ornament over and over, admiring the red collar and golden bell around his neck and running a finger over the raised symbols patterning his chest. Eventually, she had handed him reverently back to her neighbour, concluding that he must, indeed, simply be magic. Momoko had turned him over in her hands few times, then added, *Maneki Neko…my present,*

when I leave Japan. From obaasan…grandmother. Jodie had nodded, remembering the wonderful presents her own Nana brought for her, too.

Alice also possessed a *Daruma Otoshi* with which she was allowed to play: the toy resembled a little totem pole made up of a wooden painted owl head and five rainbow blocks below. You had to tap each of the coloured pieces from bottom to top with a tiny hammer, without making it fall over. It was deceptively tricky, and Alice was already almost at the point of beating Jodie at the game. There were rice-paper fans, exquisitely detailed dolls and hand-made origami mobiles, too—Jodie would point to something and Momoko would sound out its Japanese name, until she got it, then Jodie gave her the name in English: *doll, curtain, fan, toy, picture*. Alice had taken to playing the game in stereo with her mother. The combination of that tiny little voice and happy grin, together with their mutually dubious pronunciations, invariably reduced them all to fits of laughter.

Today is different, Jodie notices: Alice's tape recorder (which usually alternated with Japanese and English nursery rhymes, together with a little bit of *Abba* and *Skyhooks* when Jodie visited) is silent and the radio is on, instead. The television is also on with the sound turned down, presumably to monitor the cyclone updates that were now almost on the hour. Jodie follows Momoko into the kitchen and finds Mr Kokkinos at the kitchen table, which is strewn with batteries, candles, a couple of torches and duct tape. He is poring over the newspaper and frowning. They are making more comparisons between Cyclone Joan and Tracy, and he doesn't like it, not at all. *Tracy…$837 million in damage….destroyed more than 70 percent of Darwin's buildings…71 dead. Seventy one…dead*— he looks up, sees Jodie, smiles warmly. He closes the paper back to the front page.

'*Kalimera*, Johdee.' The greeting flows from his mouth like honey. Jodie thinks that English sounds lumpy, like spitting out little rocks for words, compared with his native Greek. Mr Kokkinos is much older than Momoko, maybe her Dad's age. He is built compactly but strongly and radiates intelligence and authority. Jodie finds herself, as always, a little lost for words around him. Mr Kokkinos is at home just like her Dad, making preparations for the storm. The port is deserted by now; all the ships have left to face the cyclone out at sea. The girl is worried about why the Port Authorities would turn the ships out of a safe harbour into the open sea, with all those men on board. It seemed like a cruel and dangerous thing to do.

'Um, *Kalimera*, Mr Kokkinos. Mum sent me to see if I could do anything to help you get ready for the cyclone.' He considers, his slow grin warming the chocolate brown, slightly almond-shaped eyes he has given his daughter.

'Thank you, Jodie—maybe you help by keeping an eye on Alice for a little while, so we can make preparations.' His English is good, but you had to listen carefully until you got used to his accent. Momoko is looking down at the front page of *The West Australian* (the rural edition usually made it into the town's shops and servos by lunchtime, courtesy of MMA Airline). It is all about Cyclone Joan, of course; there is a large picture of her taken with the latest satellite technology. She is about 310km north of Port Hedland. The clarity and depth of the image is unnerving. Joan seems to rotate on the page, glaring from the absolute centre with her pin-prick eye. Jodie has never seen such a detailed satellite picture before and thinks, *this was taken from space—she must be huge.* The girl doesn't say anything, of course; this is Momoko's first major cyclone and she doesn't want to scare her unnecessarily. Her neighbour suddenly snaps her fingers, grabs Jodie's arm with one hand and gestures at her husband with another. She talks rapidly to Mr Kokkinos, who says something back, then nods, gets to his feet. He says, *My wife has something special to show you.*

They return to Japan in the front room. Mr Kokkinos carries Alice, who happily taps the receding dark hair on his head with her *Daruma* hammer. The little girl's arm is in porcelain relief against her father's olive skin. Momoko follows a moment later, cradling a rolled-up object. The newspaper is tucked under her arm. She places the package down on the low table, unrolls it to reveal a bamboo blind painted in minute detail. She says, *Watashi wa, katarubeki monogatari o motte iru …Makino Heinei* and Phil is a little bit stern. He tells her, *English, Momoko—try, and I will help you.* Momoko nods impatiently, points at the picture. It shows a man in a little wooden boat getting tossed about in a wild storm, clinging to the mast. Transparent lines in grey-blue slice through the scene, depicting fierce winds and heavy rain. The backdrop, the foreground, everywhere, is all grey and white-capped waves, dwarfing that tiny boat with its unfortunate captain. 'Makino Heinei,'[3] she repeats, pointing at the man. 'Brave

[3] The tale of Makino Heinei is adapted from *Shinto and Japanese Religions: Ancient Tales and Folk-lore of Japan* by Richard Gordon-Smith (1918).

man. Hero! Story….from childhood. Get—*wash away*, big storm!' she taps the newspaper, makes elaborate wave motions with her hands, mimics the sound of the wind. Alice shrieks excitedly, points at her mother. Jodie nods, understanding. Yep, *big* storm. 'Wash up on…strange island. Still alive. Phew!' She swipes her forehead in relief, tosses her shiny dark hair. Alice gasps, clutching her father's generous nose with one tiny hand. Momoko does not need any help from her husband, from anyone. Momoko's halting words do not matter, for she fills the gaps with gesture and expression. Her voice is lyrical, singsong, eyes bright and dancing. 'Heinei meet giant— *Tomaru.* Her arms extend wide, high. A *big* giant! Make friends—' she points at Jodie, smiles. The girl feels warm inside. 'Makino go back home, with treasure. Magic seaweed…make sick better! Present from *Tomaru.* People very happy.' She grins triumphantly and claps. Phil grins back, warm brown eyes twinkling at his exquisite wife. He claps lightly and says, *Bra´vo Momoko.* Jodie claps too and Alice copies. *Yay!*

***

Jodie is almost ready to leave, for she still has her own preparations assigned in readiness for Joan's arrival. Japan has all but gone into hiding for a little while; the delicate blinds, fans and knick-knacks have been swathed in tea towels and bubble wrap, carefully placed in boxes and stowed at the bottom of the wardrobes in both bedrooms. Phil is wary about flooding from all the rain expected and knows his wife would be heartbroken if her treasures from home suffered water damage. Only *Maneki Neko*, the lucky cat, waves down at them from his suddenly deserted shelf, gold and red and defiant. Momoko needs him to be brave and stay, to watch over Alice.

Jodie still has one more question that troubles her, has done for a while. Perhaps made braver by the memory of Makino Heinei, she abruptly turns. 'Mr Kokkinos—do you mind if I ask you a question? It's kind of important.' She tries to meet his eye but looks down instead, colouring up as usual. He pauses, then nods, gestures. *Go ahead.*

'Why are the big tankers made to run out to sea when a cyclone comes? Won't they be safer in the port? It seems….like a horrible thing to do.' Her voice trails off.

Mr Kokkinos looks at her, *sees* her. It is an important question. He smiles, gestures at the armchair, nods for her to sit. 'The ships put out to sea because they much safer out there. If they

break their moorings while still in port, they run aground. Cause a lot of damage, a lot of danger, for everyone.'

'How do they stop from getting swept away? Joan is so *strong.*' Jodie is thinking of Makini Heinei clinging to the mast in the fierce wind and the monster waves. She doubts that even the huge ore tankers are big enough to face the black-and-white buzz saw blade monster on the front page.

Phil nods gravely and places thumb and forefinger either side of his nose in a familiar gesture. His dark eyebrows seem to almost meet in the middle as he frowns in concentration. He wants to explain this properly, so this sensitive little girl will not have to worry. 'During such a storm…the usual thing is to *steam full ahead on the anchors*. They go out far….to the edge of the Continental Shelf, you know this?' Jodie nods. That was where you caught the big fish. A Grand Canyon, underwater. He continues. 'The Shelf…is 100 fathoms—600 feet. Very deep! But…the big ships have *four thousand five hundred feet* of chain. So you still have an awful lot of chain out.'

'What if…the chain breaks?' Jodie is not quite convinced.

'Ah…but a ship can *ride* on a storm. Use the engines: full steam ahead. Captains are very smart—experienced. Even a big ugly tanker is still a ship…can be graceful. Is built for the sea, belongs there. A lot safer than in port.'

Jodie thinks about this for a moment or two. Then, bolder than ever before, she asks one more question.

'What about the tugs?' she loves sitting on the dock down at the port, watching the big ships come in. Her favourite time to watch them is at sunset, when the sun sinks behind the Finucane Island wharf in a fiery ball of yellow and orange. On weekends, she is allowed to stay later, when the sun's heat cools to pinky dusk and the tankers are transformed from ugly metal rectangles to floating cities of light. The fussy little tugs that usher them into port look like fireflies in the twilight.

Bill holds up his hand, fingers splayed. 'We have five tugs at Hedland port; not too many. Not too big, either—less damage if they get tossed about. So we man them, put them into harbour and tie them up securely. They'll be safe, not to worry.'

Bill farewells her with *Andio, Jodie* and the girl turns to go, but she is stopped by Momoko, who presses something cool and solid into her hands. She looks down. It is *Maneki*

Neko, the lucky cat. He is even more beautiful close up, his paintwork delicate and exquisite. He is surprisingly heavy, made of some kind of solid metal. She smiles at the generous gesture but knows it is too much. She carefully extends the gift back to her friend.

'Thank you, Momoko. I love him but I want him to stay here, to watch over Alice.' She gives her neighbour a little half-hug around the waist and is gone, flitting across the communal tarmac between the two homes.

The Kokkinos family watches her leave. Phil sees that Momoko wears a happy smile, repeated in perfect miniature on his little daughter's face. Momoko strokes the lucky cat and says, *Shikashi, watashi wa anata ni kare o ataeru* in her clear musical voice. This time, Phil does not say, *English Momoko*!

But I give him to you.

Dad is busy tying the Torana to the carport supports and covering it up with the big orange tarp. The car is still virtually brand new, after all. Jodie nods at him and summons a smile from the glow she carries. A present from Momoko. The wind suddenly whips the tarp up, and Dad *Ahhh*'s in annoyance. She makes as if to help, but his expression does not welcome it. Instead, he turns towards the window, calls *Emily! Here!* Jodie goes inside, passing her mother in the doorway hurrying out. She had been halfway through getting lunch ready.

Jodie's head is full of Makino Heinei's story: the big storm, the strange island and the scary giant. She sees the oil tankers out at sea, no longer massive at all. Full steam ahead on their anchors, going nowhere. Facing the giant buzz saw blade in the sky. It glares at them with its angry black eye, but the great ships hold their own. For the first time since Joan turned her baleful eye on their town, Jodie feels comforted. Then she remembers that the pool still needs to be filled up and heads out to the backyard to uncoil the garden hose. She is happy to help, but it seems like a waste of water. It is only a tiny above-ground job that the kids never use, but who ever heard of a *pool* blowing away?

Chapter Four: Yellow Alert—Cyclone Imminent

Satellite photographs provided the primary location data from the time of the cyclone's genesis until about 0930 7 December, when the eye of the cyclone came within the range of the weather watch radar at Port Hedland. As the radar was able to position the eye of the cyclone accurately, reliable statements of its speed and direction of movement could be passed to those communities threatened by its approach.
Bureau of Meteorology Report July 1979- Cyclone Joan 1975, p. 8

2.45pm 7th December, 1975
73A Crawford Street

'That's okay, Elanna. I'll send one of the kids over.' Jodie's mother hangs up the phone and looks over at Ian and Jodie sitting on the floor, carefully wrapping her willow pattern china in newspaper. It is just like moving day. The crockery belonged to an eight-piece table setting, complete with serving platter, teacups, sugar bowl and milk jug. It was one of Mum's most prized wedding presents and survived the journey all the way from England intact. Months in a tea chest in the hold of a cargo boat, going around the Cape of Good Hope, and not a chip in any of it. Unfortunately, the teapot, four plates and three teacups did not survive the journey by road from Bunbury to Port Hedland. Moving companies in Australia can be really shoddy. Mum shed quiet tears when she unpacked it all and found the breakages. She carefully stowed the rest in the kitchen cupboards, arranging the remaining cups on top of the saucers and trying to hide the gaps. Rachel suggested they leave it packed up and get a cheap setting from the Emporium in town for everyday use. Mum wouldn't hear of it, she said that beautiful things should never gather dust and were to be used and enjoyed, every day—even if, sometimes, accidents did happen.

'That was Mrs Witte—Grandad Martin is worried they don't have enough milk stocked up and we have plenty. Can one of you run over a carton of long life?'

Jodie and Ian both jump up—you can only wrap so much crockery before going crazy, after all. Mum hands over the carton from the pantry, tells them not to be long. According to the radio, the Red Flag is due to go up over at the Civic Centre by 4pm, when wind gusts of over 100km per hour are forecast. They promise, bang out of the door, waving at Phil who is out the front fiddling with his Landcruiser. He is preoccupied with lugging stuff about and doesn't see

them. The kids tear down the driveway, racing each other. The wind is really up now and tastes like salt and metal. Mrs Witte and Grandad Martin live two doors down, in a brick and tile house with an excellent retaining wall out the front—it slopes at a 45° angle and is fun to run across. They dash across the red-rust concrete flags on tilted feet, racing the wind under a rapidly darkening sky. Ian is in front, but only just. He vaults over the low corrugated fence at the end of the slope, lands in the neighbour's front yard. His sister follows a heartbeat later and they arrive at the front door, dead heat.

'Beat ya!' Shove.

'Did not. And I was carrying the milk, you little worm.' Bigger shove back.

Elanna Witte opens the door in time to avert bloodshed. Her mad copper hair has broken free from its elastic band and stands out in a frizzy halo. 'Oh, thank God—you know what Dad can be like. We already have enough milk for a *hundred* cups of tea but he says we could be cut off for *weeks*. Look, come inside and talk to him for a little while, will you? Thank you so much, he's driving me mad!' She ushers the siblings into the front room, which smells of tobacco smoke and leather. Martin Stewart—who is nobody's actual Grandfather but is known as Grandad Martin to the neighbourhood kids—is slumped in his favourite chair rolling a ciggie. His ferocious expression rearranges when he sees them and he smiles in his way that is gruff and real. Grandad Martin speaks only if he has something to say and smiles only if he means it. Jodie sees these traits as a very good thing: he is always worth listening to and his smile goes all the way to his eyes. He is the closest thing to a real grandfather that the Cadogan kids have ever known, but they do not see themselves as missing out.

'Ah, it's sixty-six per cent of those Cadogan kids. There's trouble, if I ever did see.'

Jodie giggles. Mum says Grandad Martin is barking mad. His daughter, Elanna, is usually the first to agree. Ian likes the fact that he rarely returns from Grandad Martin's without five cents in his pocket (which is always spent the next day over at the swimming pool kiosk). Jodie saves her five cents in her pewter money box shaped like a rocking horse, for she is going to Japan one day. Maybe Alice will go with her. Not that her visits here are financially motivated; mostly, she comes for his stories. Grandad Martin has lived in Hedland forever, and knows everything and everyone.

'Can we do anything to help, Mrs Witte? We just have to be home by four o'clock, in case of the wind and the Red Flag, that's all.' Elanna regards the polite little girl with the white-blonde eyelashes and red-blonde hair, tilts her head, considering.

'Well-ell…I DO have a whole tub of Neopolitan ice-cream in the freezer that is bound to go to *gloop* once the power goes out. I reckon we won't manage to finish it in time, do you, Dad?' Grandad Martin shakes his head gravely.

'*Yeah*! I bags the chocolate stripe.' Ian doesn't hesitate. He leaps to his feet, bounds towards the kitchen. Elanna follows him, making a sweeping motion with her broom behind him. Mrs Witte is great with kids. Jodie thinks it's such a shame she doesn't have any. Six years ago, her husband was killed when his Landrover hit a big 'roo and rolled, on the way back from a fishing weekend with his mates on Eighty Mile Beach. Elanna used the insurance payout to buy a nice house and make a fresh start. After her mother had succumbed to dementia last year, she persuaded her father to give up the family house on Athol Street and move in with her—to keep each other company, she always said.

The girl curls up on the leather lounge with the wildly colourful macramé cushions and the crocheted throw rug. They were all made by Elanna's mother, Ruby. She was Grandad Martin's Darling Girl and wife of forty years, until she started wandering away in her head and forgot how to find her way back to him. There was an outpouring of sympathy and support when she had to move to a nursing home down in Perth, for Grandad Martin is regarded as something of a National Treasure in this town. He marches at the head of the Anzac parade every year wearing his war medals. On Saturday afternoons, he helps out at the Returned Service League, or RSL shop, making those little identity labels you stick on people's clothing. He thinks the world of the ladies who sort through and repair donated clothing to sell for charity and it is entirely mutual.

Now Jodie looks at Grandad Martin expectantly. He looks back at her, this little girl with the Been Here Before Eyes. *She's an observer for now; sees more than she should and remembers it all. One day, she'll have stories of her own to tell.* They run through their routine.

'Hey, Old Man.'

'Hey, Little Girl.'

'Got any stories?'

'Depends. Got any time?'

‘Umm, about an hour. There’s a storm coming, y’know.’ She checks her *guess-timation* against the wooden clock on the wall. Just under an hour. This day seems to be speeding up, even as it winds down. Not a night any of them were looking forward to, either, but she pushes that thought, a furtive prickle down her spine, away for now.

‘Ah, a cyclone! Looks like Joan’s gonna be a grouchy bitch, too.’

‘Dad! Language—in front of the kids, too!’ his daughter returns with a tray loaded with bowls of multicoloured ice-cream. ‘No ice-cream for you until you’ve paid your fine.’

Grandad Martin heaves a massively exaggerated sigh and rummages wearily in his back pocket. He examines the coins in his well-used wallet, tosses one each to the siblings. ‘*Damn* swear fines keep me poor. And that’s double for the *damn;* it’s worth it.’

Jodie looks in her palm, sees ten cents sitting there. Smiles her thanks and zips it securely into the pocket of her shorts. Ian whoops.

‘Ten cents, beauty! I can get a Sherbert Fountain *and* a Crazy Maze!’ Elanna tells him to save it for now as he can count on the pool kiosk being closed tomorrow, and probably for a few days after that.

‘So—it’s cyclones we’re talking today, eh?’ the old man twiddles his spoon thoughtfully. His daughter is suddenly wary.

‘Is that a good idea, Dad? You don’t want to frighten them. Maybe a *different* topic would be better?’ Both kids assure her it wouldn’t be and encourage him to continue. Grandad Martin considers, concludes that kids are tough and it was a long time ago. He finishes up his ice-cream, sets the bowl aside. He takes up his tobacco again, rolls the paper between thumb and finger. The living wind outside provides an eerie backdrop as his story begins:

I was a young lad of eighteen, working as a storeman at A.H. Wilson’s. I arrived in the town the year before, when I was a deckhand on a supply ship delivering beer to the Commercial Hotel. I’d been hearing encouraging things about a mining boom in the area and thought I’d stay on and look around. It was March 1912 and the days had been long and the air so still and thick and steamy, you could cut it with a knife and you felt it when you breathed in. Your skin was slick with sweat that weighed you down. All of the energy was sucked out of you. The sea was smooth, like glass; it seemed that you could walk on it. Even the fish seemed too tired to swim.

There was double excitement down at the wharf, for two beautiful steamships were at berth, bound for different directions: the Koombana *to the north, and the* Bullara *to the south.* Koombana *was only three years old; a proud ship of some 3,700 tonnes with elegant lines. I didn't get to go on board but I did hear she was truly beautiful, like the* 'Orient Express' *inside. All leather sofas, writing tables, lovely fittings. You'd think that all of the ships visiting our dusty little port town would be quite ordinary, but no; many people coming to the North-west, even in those days, had plenty of money and they loved to travel in luxury.*

There were no Cyclone Warning systems back then; no radars, or satellites, or weather stations or radio updates. Instead, people felt uneasy in the damp heavy heat and trusted instinct and town gossip. They took notice of the pearl divers coming in on the luggers who told of strange hot and cold layers in the water as they went down and came up.

The blow built up slowly but hit suddenly. The smell of rain blew in from the east and in no time hail strafed the scorched sand like an attacking Fighter Bomber. As morning arrived, the wind turned southerly and blew mightily under a darkening sky. Any boats left in the port huddled in the harbour or made for the safety of the tidal inlets, racing the incoming storm clouds.

And the Koombana *and the* Bullara, *God help them, put out to that dreadful sea, as scheduled. Captain Allen took the* Koombana *out at 11am, with 146 people on board. Half an hour later, Captain Upjohn took the helm of* Bullara, *her load of cattle penned on deck, steaming valiantly in her wake.*

Grandad Martin is silent for a moment or two, pausing in the memory. The wind outside rises a notch, filling in the story. His audience forgets to breathe. Then the old man continues and his voice is tired.

For me, the worst part is that hardly anyone saw them leave; we were too busy chaining, tying and shuttering the town down against the blow. Bert Clark did; he was about my age and kept his binoculars precariously trained on the Koombana from high up the navigation tower. It wasn't safe up there; it was as windy as hell up on the platform, but he knew it wasn't going well for the ships and he couldn't bear to leave them. The sandbar wasn't dredged like it is now, so on a neap tide Koombana *put to with a light load and empty ballast tanks in order to clear it. Bert forced himself to watch her until she cleared the horizon. She fought that angry sea for over*

two hours, instead of the usual thirty-five minutes, until she finally disappeared from view. He may well have been the last person ever to see her.

Four days later, Bullara *limped into the Cossack port, minus her smokestack and decks swept clean by the huge waves. She'd fought through mountainous walls of water and looked into the very eye of the storm. It was a glimpse into hell that drove all on board a little bit mad.*

Nonetheless, upon finding out that Koombana *never made it into Broome, Captain Upjohn oversaw the rigging of a strange jury mast from whatever could be scrounged from the cargo.* Bullara *put out to sea yet again, this time with a hasty flotilla of all seaworthy vessels left in the vicinity. The search went on for weeks, but the only trace of her ever found was a stateroom door, some cushions and bottle sleeves from her cargo. She went down somewhere in the fathomless Indian Ocean, taking all on board with her.*[4]

There is a brief silence as he finishes, for sometimes memories grow sharper and more powerful over time. Elanna worries in case the story has frightened the children, with another big blow so close. The siblings are not concerned about that right now, for they both have questions for Grandad Martin and today there's not much time left.

Ian wants to know if the cows on board *Bullara* made it, and Grandad Martin shakes his head mournfully. Ian goes a bit quiet. Jodie tells him about the ore carriers putting out to sea in much the same way, for she has started to worry again. The old man assures her that was quite different.

'It was all to do with timing—the storm was upon them already. There was not enough warning, back in those days. It's a lot better nowadays, infinitely so. Of course, they should have left a lot earlier, before the storm hit, or stayed in port and evacuated the ships altogether. But hindsight is a wonderful thing. The town didn't get the eye; it stayed out at sea, so although we *shook, rattled and rolled* all night, unbelievably, there wasn't a lot of damage.'

Ian wants to know why one boat survived and the other didn't. Grandad Martin shrugs. 'Luck of the draw when you get down to it, I guess. Some said that *Koombana* was top-heavy after unloading to make the sandbar and she rolled over in the heavy seas. Others blame latitude—she had the misfortune to head north instead of south.'

[4] The story of the loss of the *S.S.Koombana* is based upon the account from *Nor'Westers of the Pilbara breed* by Jenny Hardie (pp. 120—128, 2001 ed. Hesperian Press, Victoria Park), a fascinating book recommended by members of the Port Hedland Historical Society. Additional background information was provided in an interview broadcast on ABC (Kimberly), 21 August 2007, with Annie Boyd, a recreational diver and expert on the Koombana wreck.

Ian says that he is glad that at least *Bullara* made it, but he felt sorry for all those cows. Grandad Martin agrees emphatically. Elanna reminds them that it is now a quarter to four and they had best be going, or their mother will be on the phone. Her father looks aggrieved, tells her he was just about to tell them about *the great blow of 1939, when the sea invaded the town almost to the rooftops and left a third of the population homeless*. The kids look expectantly back at her but she says *Dad!* so firmly that they know that will be it for now. Her father shrugs, winks slyly at the children. Ian winks back, sighs exaggeratedly then jumps up and is gone. On the way out, he yells, *Thanks for the ice-cream and the swear fine!* Elanna calls back *No problem little mate, take care!* Jodie is about to follow, when Grandad Martin taps her arm lightly.

'I just remembered—there *was* one other, that I know of, who watched the ships leave. She was a young girl, only a little bit older than you. Her name was Violet Werrey and I knew her parents; they ran the Commercial Hotel, right on the harbour. She climbed up on the flat hotel roof in all that wind and waved excitedly as the *Koombana* passed on by. She loved ships and thought the *Koombana* was the most beautiful she'd ever seen. She was a bit of a tomboy, all tangled hair and bare feet—something like you, I think—but she cried for days after it was lost.'

***

Back at the house, Ian hasn't gone inside yet. Jodie can't blame him—it's going to be a long night and they hate being stuck indoors. He's stood side-on to the road, positioned only just on their side of the building. All of his attention is focused upon the activities of Mr Kokkinos. Phil has the Landcruiser parked out on the tarmac at an angle, with all four doors plus the pull-up at the back open. He has a big pile of, well, *heavy stuff* that he is loading onto all of the exposed floor space of the vehicle. Ian is intrigued and tells his sister so when she joins him.

'Look at all that stuff—bags of concrete, jerry cans, even a *boat anchor*! What's he doing?' Ian mutters at his sister by way of greeting.

'They don't even have a boat,' Jodie finds his curiosity infectious.

'I copped a look in the back on the way past and it's full of tool boxes and gas bottles and pipes and stuff, all tied down with ropes and ocky straps and netting.' He is thoughtful. 'I mean, most of it isn't really good for anything, except to be, well, *heavy.*'

Jodie can see that her little brother is burning up to quiz their neighbour, but doesn't want to seem rude, or risk getting yelled at. He chooses the safe option of appearing to be helpful.

'Hey Mr Kokkinos, do you want a hand with any of that?' Ian calls out across the tarmac and Phil glances up, seeming to notice the kids for the first time. Jodie hears their neighbour click his tongue against the roof of his mouth—not a good sign. Before she can stop him, her little brother moseys over and Phil raises his eyebrows in annoyance. 'Why do you need all this stuff, anyway?' Ian is being downright nosy now, but luckily for him, he has Jodie along. She smiles apologetically and makes to move her little brother along promptly. Phil sighs visibly, repositions a tackle box on the floor in the back seat and straightens, stretching his back out and wincing slightly. The dark hair on his olive-skinned forearms is plastered down with dirt and sweat.

'Weight. I need to make her heavy—in case we have to leave quickly.'

'Won't all that stuff make you leave *slower?'* Ian can't help himself.

Phil smiles at this, in spite of himself. 'Better to leave slower, but safer.' He looks down at the two children, eyes turned grey to match the sky. The little girl who lights up the lives of his two favourite ladies is suited to this strange light. Her hair has darkened to the ochre of the ore dust and taken on life, flitting playfully about her head. The hard metal sky is kind, refusing to burn her fair skin.

Phil sees that he has their full attention, wanted or not. He sighs, wipes his forehead with the front of his shirt.

'Cyclone conditions no good for driving in—big winds, floods, stuff all over the shop. Lots to drive through, drive over. Not good at all. Need to be as stable as possible. So you weigh her down, but you keep it *low*.' He indicates the empty roof rack, shaking his head. 'Not up there—down low, so you don't tip over.'

Ian gets it. He is quick with all things of a mechanical nature. He is the most like Dad of the three of them in that way.

'Like ballast in a ship, right?'

Phil nods, gives him the thumbs up then makes a shooing motion.

'Busy now—go home and help your parents. Plenty to be done.'

'Okay, will do.' Ian casts one more admiring glance at the four wheel drive. It's a FJ 55 wagon, a family car. No way as cool as a flat-top, but not bad. It is both company car and Phil's

pride and joy, a condition of his employment in exchange for taking on the long runs to Karratha. Phil is a four-wheel-drive enthusiast, and takes his little family out on camping trips whenever he has a few days off. They explore Eighty Mile Beach and visit two-billion year old rock formations at Wittenoom Gorge. They found the area where Condon used to be, which the district port was in the days before Port Hedland. Ian and Jodie had gone along from time to time (their big sister Rachel isn't bothered, in the way almost-teenagers often aren't) and always came back happy, dusty and tired. Their Dad is into sailing and is looking into buying a little Mirror Dingy, but a 4WD would be *so* much better.

They head home once again, waving '*bye* to Mr Kokkinos. The new powder blue LJ Torana is now obscured under a rippling tarp and tied to the carport with bright orange rope. It doesn't look that secure, compared with Phil's thorough preparations. It's not really a proper carport, just four skinny poles off the house building that the roof tin happens to cover. Maybe the cyclone will blow the whole lot away and they can get a 4WD, instead.

Chapter Five: Red Alert—Cyclone Strike

The people three houses up lived in one of the MMA houses; she worked for Avis…you know, beautiful, immaculate outfits, not a chip on the nail polish. So, it's blowing like buggery, roaring wind...and she rings from three doors up: I've run out of nail polish remover and I've got to get my nails done before the morning…I'll meet you halfway. *I was like,* Oh! *So we're walking like this* [mimes walking against the wind]. *I'm clutching the nail polish remover, and she comes down with a cotton ball…so we're having a bit of a chat; sheets of tin flying past, you know.* Tina Moone, interview 7 October, 2011.

4.45pm 7th December, 1975
73 (A & B) Crawford Street

Three kids stand at the top of their driveway, looking down onto the tarmac of Crawford Street. It's relatively sheltered up here, in the u-shape between the two houses bound by the carports. The sky is grey and red when it's always blue and the light is failing already. No one will see the sunset tonight, when it is there every night. Jodie pulls free a long strand of hair whipping into her eyes, wonders how long it will be before they see the sun again. Over at the Civic Centre, a smear of red tears madly at its fastenings. Red flag, twelve hours to go. Stay in your homes or else. Directly opposite, the pool huddles, its blue waters turned to metal.

The road below was cut through sandstone and forms a natural wind-tunnel. The outriders for Joan are visible down there already, scouting on ahead to check the lie of the land. These erratic winds have dipped into the iron-ore stockpiles set back from the wharf and are mischievously contaminating everything they touch with vaporous red fingers. The kids can already see occasional bits of debris flying about down there: a palm frond, a rubbish bag, the remains of a cardboard box. The air smells tinny and salty and thrums with heat and power. Every so often an updraft tendril reaches for them and they have to brace themselves, eyes squinting.

'I wish the pool was open.' Above the wind, Ian voices the annoyance they are all feeling. It's stinking hot as usual and they would normally be over there until at least 5pm. What a waste. They are silent for a few minutes, watching and thinking.

'The hairs on my arm are standing up,' says Jodie, holding up her forearm.

‘Weird.’ Says Ian, examining his own arm with interest. ‘Mine, too.’

‘You can actually *see* the wind,’ says Rachel, raising her voice to be heard above the noise. ‘That’s really, really weird.’

Ian agrees. ‘The wind looks like a tunnel down there. Like…a red pipe.' He shrugs. ‘I wonder if you could stand up in it?’

'They reckon that Joan is as big as Tracy was—the one that took Darwin last Christmas.' Jodie is matter of fact. The radio and the telly have been on non-stop all day and she hears the adults talking. They never think kids are listening. Jodie remembered the mournful song on the radio from last year; *Santa never made it into Darwin.* A *big wind came and blew the town away.*[5] Grandad Martin called it *Music to slash your wrists by*.

'Yeah, but Darwin got the eye of the cyclone. The winds came back the other way, so they got hit from both sides. We've never had that.' Rachel is emphatic. The wind is still getting up and now she’s all but yelling. As the oldest, she sees her job as keeping her younger siblings as calm as possible. Sometimes she is just plain bossy, but today her intentions are basically good, so Jodie doesn’t argue.

'Grandad Martin says that *All they do in Darwin is drink fooking cocktails and go fishing instead of getting their houses ready and it's no wonder it blew away*.' Ian is solemnly loud, perfectly mimicking their neighbour in one of his crustier moods. Jodie cracks up at that one, her pealing laughter contagious.

‘Oh-my-*Gawd*, how much did *that* cost him for the swear jar? I hope Mrs Witte didn’t hear him!’

Ian nods again, his solemn face cracking. ‘You betcha she did—I got *fifty* cents out of it!’

Rachel taps him in the chest smartly and says *Language, young man!* in a perfect impersonation of their mother. That’s it, all three of them are off now, laughing in the tinny red wind you can see.

Momoko comes out holding Alice, watches them in wonder. Either the storm has driven them all mad or there is less to worry about than she thought. Alice points and giggles at them and her mother smiles. They are all here together and that is a good thing, maybe the best thing. She goes over and Jodie grins at the little girl, claps her hands. Alice abruptly sways towards her

[5] "Santa Never Made It Into Darwin" is a song by pop duo *Bill and Boyd*, consisting of Bill Cate and Boyd Robertson. It documented the events of Cyclone Tracy that devastated the city of Darwin on Christmas eve 1974. The song made it to number 1 on the Australian national charts. *http://www.sergent.com.au/music/billboyd.html*

so that Momoko and Jodie have to make an impromptu chair with their arms so she doesn't fall, before the girl pulls her in close against the wind.

They continue to watch the Red Pipe for a few more minutes, feeling its warmth and power on their skin. Jodie decides that it is actually kind of exciting, in a strange way. *Curiouser and curiouser! said Alice down the rabbit hole.* They had all seen *Alice in Wonderland* at the Friday Flicks held in the school library. Jodie was disappointed to find it was the first-ever Disney movie she didn't like, the book even less so, after she had borrowed it from the school library. She made herself read it the whole way through, just to make sure she hadn't missed anything. Neither book nor film made any sense, and that was irritating. Today she sees it differently, sees that *Alice in Wonderland* is a perfect fit. Jodie realises now that that is the whole point; some things just *are* and not meant to be understood.

Ian declares that if a cow or 'roo flies past down there, he is definitely going inside. Right on cue, Mum calls them in to have tea and have a shower before the power goes out. Jodie carefully hands Alice back to Momoko, regretting the finality of giving up this day so early. It feels like they are saying goodbye, like they should hug or something, but that would make it worse. The dilemma is shelved as the unaccustomed keen of a siren materializes above the wind. It increases in volume, drawing out the remaining adults from 73 A and B Crawford Street to investigate. Phil takes Alice from his wife and places a protective hand on her shoulder. Momoko is shivering just a little, but she is not cold, not at all.

The wail reaches a crescendo as a police car materializes on the road below, heading west towards Sutherland Street. It's travelling slowly, probably only in second or third gear. The driver keeps both hands on the wheel as he peers through the smeary windscreen, navigating the wind and debris. The windscreen wipers are not achieving a lot and look ready to seize up. His partner is in charge of the mobile unit's Public Address system, the speakers mounted either side of the flashing red and blue lights. The vehicle, until recently a brand new white Ford Falcon, has been prematurely aged with a muddy coating of dark red dust. Both windows are cranked down to enable regular clearance of the debris piling up on the windscreen. The incoming wind is hindering the policemen's vision, their reflective sunglasses proving inadequate against the silty wind. PA Cop bawls a repetitive monologue into his hand piece that can only be made out as the spectacle passes directly by:

Attention, all residents. This town is now on Red Alert. I repeat, a Red Alert is now in place. Cyclone strike is imminent and Martial Law has been declared. Any person found outside will be arrested for their own safety. You are ordered to take shelter in a safe place immediately. Remain indoors until the All Clear is given, I repeat—remain indoors.

The kids' laughter is snuffed out. This sounds *serious*. Little prickles of fear steal up Jodie's spine for the first time and her mouth goes dry. She looks up at first her neighbour and then her father warily, trying to gauge their reaction. *Permission to panic, grown-ups?* Phil notices the look and glances over at Gerald. The wind certainly has gotten up this past few minutes, for he finds it necessary to yell, loud enough for all of the children to hear. 'That's not something you see every day, Gerald!'

His neighbour looks across at Phil and then down at the kid's faces. Gerald gets it. He bawls back, 'Not at all, Phil. I'm not sure if they are very brave coppers or very stupid. I do hope they make it back to the station in one piece!'

Both Dads grin reassuringly for the benefit of their kids. Jodie hears her father say something about *authoritarian madness* to her mother. Ian is already something of a car buff and yells at Phil, 'Did you *see* that cop car? A Ford Falcon XY GT—the ultimate and fastest six cylinder ever made by Ford!' Phil, not quite able to make out what he is saying, smiles down at him anyway, just a shade on the side of patronizing. Ian can see that, but adds anyway, 'Cripes, I sure hope they don't crash it. What a waste *that* would be.'

It is now too windy for comfort, and possibly for safety, outside, so the kids get ushered indoors. Momoko waves Phil in with Alice, tells him *five more minutes.* Ian asks Mum, *Could Port Hedland really get blown away like Darwin did last Christmas?* Mum is not really concentrating and tells him, *Of course not, we're much better prepared here and besides, Christmas is* weeks *away.* Ian sighs theatrically and stomps off to annoy the dog.

Jodie watches her neighbour from the dining room window, a lone figure laced in steel checks through the cyclone wire. Momoko raises her arms and sways, her fingers dancing with the wind. The warm air plays with her dress, makes the material breathe and dance about her. Mum is behind Jodie looking on too, tells her daughter *No wonder, she would never have seen anything like it*. Jodie thinks of the wailing police car patrolling deserted streets, wonders if they have ever seen anything like it, either. She leaves Momoko to dance with the storm, hoping that

Phil brings her in pretty soon or she will get blown away like Makino Heinei and have to face the giant alone.

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They've had dinner, a quick one because Mum's been busy. Chips with black bits, fried sliced spam and egg with baked beans. Ian got told off for trying to pick the black bits off the chips, then told off again when he conversationally pointed out that it might be time to change the chip oil. Nobody was all that hungry. The kids ate slowly, even though you have to eat fry-up's quickly or the food goes cold and congealed and you have to sit there until you eat it anyway.

They got to watch *Countdown* as usual and for once, the adults sat down on the lounge and watched too, although it is not their cup of tea. It almost felt like a regular Sunday night, except there's no school tomorrow (and maybe not for a few days after that) and the telly had to be cranked right up so you could hear it over the wind outside. Then the programme had gotten cut off right at the end by another cyclone update. Ian was devastated because they had missed out the weekly countdown. He was convinced that AC/DC's new single *It's a Long Way to the Top (If You Wanna Rock 'n' Roll)* would have been #1 for sure and then they would have played the song all the way through. Dad says *Stop being so stupid I can't hear a bloody thing.* Ian flops back down on the floor, sulking.

The cyclone updates have been hourly since 5pm. Dad has the state map unfolded all over the kitchen bench, overlaid with bits of paper, pen and pencil, protractor and calculator. He's been plotting the path of the storm for five days now, keeping track as she moves down the coast. Every update from the telly and the radio is precisely noted and calculated, marked on the map with a clear dot in black pen, and joined up to its predecessors in a wavering line. Jodie has had a bit of a furtive look at it and concluded once more that her Dad was extremely clever. She wished she could talk to him about his work, get him to explain what he did that kept him away for so many hours and made him so bad-tempered all the time. Rachel, the oldest, had never taken much interest in her Dad's job, but sometimes Jodie and Ian would quiz Mum about it. Everyone knew from school that Port Hedland handled the most tonnage of any port in the whole of Australia, so obviously Dad's job must be important. Mum knew a lot about it from talking to him late at night when the kids were in bed. She seemed happy to pass on what she knew to her

kids and would go right back to the basics. It seemed quite complicated to Jodie, although Ian caught on faster than she did. Dad was a *draft* surveyor, the 'draft' meaning the ship's depth below the water. His job was to work out the weight of each ship's cargo, be it iron-ore, or salt, or whatever. This was done by draft survey, which is based upon the principle that a ship displaces its own weight in water. Ian seemed readily to understand the basic theory of it all, despite being only eight years old.

'So you know the Constant, which is how much the ship weighs plus its fuel and everything else, and you take this from the Final (the ship's weight minus cargo and everything) and this becomes the weight of the cargo!' Ian always recited this with a bit of a flourish, to which Mum would say *Well done, Professor*, with just a bit of sarcasm so he won't get a big head, but her eyes were proud and a little bit sad, too.

Dad was always away the longest when a strike was on and there was a lot of union activity going on these days. Mum once explained that, as soon as the big ore carriers arrived, they declared Notice of Readiness and could claim compensation pay from Mount Newman Mining (or whatever company contracted them) straight away. It wasn't their fault they couldn't just load up and leave and they had their own wages and expenses to pay as well. Mum always told them that the surveyors were the most important people in the port anyway, but especially so when a strike was over. Until the drafts were correct, no ship was going anywhere. Jodie and Ian already knew about the necessity of *even displacement* of cargo and why the port had draft limitations. It was absolutely essential that all ships left for open seas on an even keel, with all of their ballast pumped out. Any ship with too much cargo in its head or stern would be unstable at sea and tip over, or break its back straight down the middle.

One time, Mum told them there were thirty-one ships lined up to come into port after the unions put a spanner in the works for five weeks. Dad was away for four days straight and only managed to snatch an hour's nap here and there the whole time. The strike was running up *fifteen thousand dollars* in costs per day, so it was no wonder the surveyors were run off their feet once things got under way again. Each ship normally had a turnaround time of twenty-four hours between arrival, loading and departure.

'After the strike, they had to move the backlog as soon as they could, so your Dad devised a system to get the turnaround done in *twelve hours*.' Mum had been proud and tired and worried at the same time, Jodie could tell. 'He was able to do that by taking charge of the

loading. He watched the two loaders, rated at five tonnes per hour, and saw that one was only doing three tonnes. So he gets the foreman to blast the driver and things start happening.'

'That's less than twice as fast, though.' Ian had not been completely convinced. 'How did he manage to cut the time in half?'

'He got everyone in the port involved, that's how. He over-rode the mate to stop the loading for a draft check, then, instead of doing them all himself, he'd have someone placed for'ard, aft, port side and starboard side to read the drafts all at the same time. What does that all mean, Ian?'

'Easy—front, back, left and right of the ship!' Ian had recited all this importantly while Jodie rolled her eyes.

'He pulled the pilot and the tugs in line, too, got them all hurried up. As soon as loading for each ship was done, your Dad was already on the wharf reading the drafts. As he walked up the gangway they'd pull it up behind him and away she'd go. He'd finalise the figures as the ship left port.'

'How did Dad get back, then?' Jodie hadn't known he actually put out to sea. She would love to travel overseas on board one of the huge vessels, bound for faraway places.

'He came back on the helicopter—the decks are big enough to take off from and land on. Anyway, he kept going the whole four days and ended up saving twelve hours each on thirty-one ships, which was a *lot* of money!'[6] Jodie had thought that Mum was right to be proud of him, but when she suggested they ask Dad themselves about his job, the kids went quiet. Dad was usually tired and cranky when he got home and they had to stay out of his way. Either that or they'd be in bed already. Work was always the *last* thing he felt like talking about at home.

Jodie goes back into the living room, where Ian is perched in the single seater, flicking through a car magazine. He tenses up as Pablo, the family's pet Chihuahua, jumps up onto his lap. Ian tries to tug his magazine free from under the dog and Pablo starts growling at him, his tiny sharp teeth bared. The boy raises both hands in the air in an *I surrender* gesture. '*Mu-um!* What do I do now?' She looks up from her book, an indulgent little smile in the corner of her mouth.

'He's probably a bit frightened by the wind and wants a bit of comfort, that's all.'

[6] Detail from interview with my father, Henry Dewsnap, on 10 February 2010, at his Cloverdale residence. Dad was a Marine Surveyor in Port Hedland during this era. Many of Gerald Cadogan's employment details are based upon his experiences.

'How do I do *that*? If I try and pat him, he'll bite me!'

'Just sit still and you'll be fine.' Ian groans as the little dog contentedly turns around and around on his stomach, crumpling the magazine even further before settling with a sigh. Ian sits a bit rigidly because, whenever he moves, Pablo snarls under his breath.

Mum goes back to reading her book on the lounge and Dad's glued to *Four Corners* on the telly. Kerry O'Brien's been following Gough Whitlam around the country on the campaign trail. Gough is still angry at being sacked by the Governor General and is determined to win his job back at the election in just under a week's time. Several rallies are featured in the report and Gough is sweaty and outraged at them all. Rachel looks up from her *Jinty* comic and takes a bit of an interest. She's in Grade Seven and they have been doing this in school. She wants to know why Gough is still allowed to run for Prime Minister when he already got himself sacked. Dad doesn't usually mind intelligent questions and tells her *We still live in a democratic country and the people have the right to the final say*, without taking his eyes off the screen. Then he adds, *Even if Gough Whitlam is a corrupt bastard.* Mum looks up, says *Language, Gerald!* then goes back to her book. Jodie watches the screen for a little bit. Kerry O'Brien reports that the Labor Party is finding it hard to fund the campaign now they have to pay for it themselves, instead of the taxpayers. Overtime and benefits have been cut in the Labor camp and Gough is calling on party supporters to do a bit of fundraising. The scene cuts to the crowd, where money is being thrust at Party Faithfuls.[7] Jodie is reminded of the collecting plate in church on Sundays, but with *bundles* of money. She sighs, losing interest. Mum looks up from her book and points out that *The Federal Election may well be in less than a week's time, but here in Hedland we have more than that to worry about at the moment.*

Four Corners winds up and yet another cyclone update takes over the screen. *Joan* is the largest thing on the map of Western Australia, a great circular blade being driven squarely into their town. All you can see by now is *rt Hedland* among all the angles and swirly lines. The weatherman announces gravely: 'Tropical Cyclone Joan continues to intensify, with winds gusting 240km per hour to its epicenter as it moves in a south to south-westerly direction 210km off the coast of Western Australia. The cyclone is expected to make landfall in the early hours of

[7] Detail based upon 'Four Corners' episode, 6 December, 1975: Australian Broadcasting Commission.

tomorrow morning. The town of Port Hedland and surrounding districts are on High Alert. Local winds gusting 140km per hour—'

'Right, kids, how about you get off to bed so you can read for a bit before the power goes out? Could be a bit of a long night, so best to get a bit of sleep.' Mum closes her book, interrupting the cyclone update, and is suddenly brisk. Dad continues scribbling down cyclone details from the television report into his notebook.

Ian tries to wriggle off the lounge but Pablo is on his feet, snarling in his face.

'*Mu-um!* He wants to tear me throat out!'

Mum sighs and gets up, tells Ian to *Keep your hands out of the way* and uses her book to swat the Chihuahua off her son's lap. The outraged little dog lands in a snapping ball of fury. He turns and holds his ground, snarling, until Mum sits back down again, then skulks off to his basket in the laundry. Ian puts his hand to his chest, breathing heavily. He says *I think me life just flashed before me eyes* and Mum tells him, *Stop being so melodramatic*.

The kids get showered, brush teeth and head off to bed. They stop and say *'Night, Dad*. Gerald looks up from his map, taps his rollie against the ashtray and mumbles, *Right, goodnight kids*. Mum always says he burns more than he smokes, anyway.

The bedrooms are towards the back of the house, off the hallway. There are three bedrooms and three kids plus parents, so Rachel and Jodie share a room. This is a major Bone of Contention with Rachel, who feels that, as the oldest, she is entitled to a room of her own. Both of her parents are quite firm about this; it wouldn't be right for a boy to share a bedroom with a girl. Ian wanders into his room alone, comes out again. He says, *Rachel can have my room tonight if she wants and I'll sleep in with Jodie.* Mum tells him he can put the mattress from his bed on the floor in the girls' room if he wants, but Ian says, *I'll see how I go for now.*

The girls' room is just big enough for two metal-framed beds set along the wall with a dressing table in the middle and a single-door wardrobe in the corner. The beds and the wardrobe were in the house when they arrived and are rubbish, but the dressing table came out from England with them and is solid mahogany, made to last. Jodie has the bed under the window and she hops in, suddenly tired out. This was a day that passed too quickly and lasted forever. Mum comes in with two glasses of water and a candle in a jam jar, each tucked under her arm, filched from the stockpile on top of the fridge. *Just in case*, she says, and puts them down on each of the

doily-covered stools that serve as beside tables. She turns on the fan that sits on top of the chest of drawers, switches it to *rotate.*

'I think we'll leave the window closed just for tonight, okay? Do you want me to leave the door open so you can feel the air-conditioner from the dining room?' Rachel votes *No thanks*, as the hallway light (left on for Ian) shines directly onto her bed. Jodie knows that you can't really feel the air conditioner in here, anyway. Better just to lie on top with the fan on.

Mum says *Goodnight, girls,* and closes the door. Rachel leaves her bed-side light on but, tonight, Jodie doesn't argue. She lies on top of her bed with the covers turned down, studying the suddenly bare room; the shelf above Rachel's bed has been emptied and the stuff from on top of the dresser stashed in the drawers. Even Jodie's big horse poster has been moved—rolled up with a lacky band and stowed in the wardrobe after Grandad Martin warned her about water damage if the rain gets in sideways.

Jodie suddenly remembers her Travel Sindy doll tucked in the middle drawer of the dresser. Without doubt, she is Jodie's most prized possession. Nana had brought her out from England last March as an early birthday present. Nana was Mum's Mum and her first name was Jean. She came to stay every two or three years for about three months and was their one lasting link with the place her mother still referred to as Back Home. She was a lovely smiley old lady with a funny accent, made funnier when she once pointed out to the kids that they would all have sounded like her, had their parents not paid the Ten Pound fares to emigrate, back in 1968. Nana's short permed hair ranged in colour from blue or purple to pure white, depending upon whether she had a 'rinse' put through it recently (whatever *that* was). Port Hedland welcomed Jean, just like they welcomed her everywhere else, as she went about slotting into town life. Nana always said she was here for a *Good time not a long time and there's nowt' time to waste*. She helped out in the school canteen, took the kids crabbing off the town jetty, swapped stories with Grandad Martin about the Old Days, taught Momoko how to make Yorkshire Puddings in a really hot oven and had a few too many shandies with the locals down at the Yacht Club bar. Mum often said she wished Nana was that nice back when she was *her* mother. Mum always tried hard not to cry when Nana left, which always set them both off. Nana would have emigrated by now, but her second husband Bertie had vertigo and couldn't fly and was frightened of boats.

Nana always brought fabulous presents from England for all of them, but, as far as Jodie was concerned, Sindy topped them all. She had glossy brown hair (just like Alice but a bit lighter), a friendly face and smaller boobs and a thicker waist than Rachel's smug and glossy Barbie dolls. Sindy wore a three piece travel suit in pink denim with removable jacket and real buttons, bell bottomed jeans and t-shirt with a Union Jack print. She even came with a vanity case that carried a trendy matching cap, spare t-shirt (with a rainbow pattern) hairbrush and, best of all, her very own passport with photo. Jodie decided straight away she would take her along to Japan when she went.

Nah then, yer Mum says yer not really one fert' playin' wi'dolls, but Ah did like this one. A doll fer a little tomboy, if ever there was one! Nana had beamed at the girl's obvious delight (she was the only person Jodie had seen whose eyes actually *twinkled*) and even more so when Jodie gave her a rare hug, straight from the heart.

Jodie sits up in bed, swings her legs over the side. 'What's the matter?' asks Rachel.

'I don't want to leave Sindy stuck in the drawer.'

Rachel rolls over, sighs. 'Oh, I wouldn't worry—she's probably safer in there. That chest of drawers is that flippin' solid, it could survive being dropped out of a jumbo jet from ten thousand feet.'

Jodie considers this and lies back down. Rachel is probably right. She says, *Goodnight Rachel* and Rachel says, *Goodnight Jodie* and the wind is howling even louder outside and the house seems to be sighing, like it's straining to hold onto the ground. Neither of them wants to be the last one to stop talking so they keep it up for ages until they fall asleep.

PART TWO: JOAN

Chapter Six: Eye of the Storm

Early in the evening, we were down on the beach watching the cyclone come in, the waves breaking over the reef. But man! During the night, it got serious. I had my three cats, and the dog…and we'd crated the cats up, and it didn't sound good. And we were thinking, If the house goes, we'll go under the floor…it was on stilts and there wasn't a lot of space, but there was enough room if the house blew away.
Tina Moone, Interview 7 October, 2011

At one stage, we walked outside to have a look and see how the neighbours were going…because out the back was the lee side of the storm, and we could see the neighbours' roof...going up and down–rippling. The lady was about eight months' pregnant…and the roof was a flat roof, with concrete slabs. So, if one of those slabs had come down on them, it would have been really bad. And their spare room—they didn't realise, but we could see—the roof had already collapsed; the concrete had given way.

So, in the middle of a cyclone, we're man-handling an eight-month pregnant lady, and their cat, and hubby across the back fence, to come in here. There was no problem with the cat, it was a nice cat (I hate the bloody things myself), but we had a dog. A big, long basset. The basset had been fed, so it didn't eat the cat…
John Van Uden, Interview 19 July, 2009

Monday December 8, 1975, 4.45am
73A Crawford Street

The wind wakes Jodie up and she can feel it through the walls. It's screaming and wants to get in. She reaches out, touches the plaster next to her bed. The rough surface is warm, vibrating, like it's breathing. The room is hot and stuffy. Mum must have closed the window and she can no longer feel the fan. She sits up and swallows with difficulty, for her mouth is dry and when she does, her ears pop. She feels for the glass Mum set down a long time ago and drains the last dregs. It tastes warm and a little metallic, like drinking saliva. She pulls a face in the darkness, tries the lamp switch. *Click click.* Nothing. No surprises there. Jodie sits up and concentrates, working her way through the layers of sound beneath the terrible wind. The incessant wine from the air-conditioner is absent, as is the clattery fridge motor. She can just make out Rachel in the bed next to her, snoring softly and blissfully oblivious to the din outside. Jodie kneels up on her bed, parts the curtain to peer outside. The glass is rusted over and she can only make out the criss-cross of the cyclone wire and vague shadows outside. Joan shrieks and

whirls about the house, sensing them inside and trying for a weakness. *Come outside and play, play with me always!*

Jodie shivers in the sticky warm air and is about to feel her way out of the room to go and get a drink, when Mum comes in. The walls sigh as the door opens. Jodie could have sworn she saw the sides of the room flex outwards, as if breathing. Of course, that must be an optical illusion caused by the shadows. Mum looks taller by the light of the candle and her voice is calm but her face is tight. Her shadow slides up the wall behind her, impossibly tall. It seems more solid than the fragile human form that hosts it. When Mum speaks, she has to project her normally soft-spoken voice to be heard above the din outside.

'Can't sleep either, love? Look, we've made up a bit of a campsite in the living room. We might as well all huddle up out there until the storm passes.'

Jodie nods, slides out of bed. It must be bad if they were evacuating to the middle of the house, but she says nothing. She pads down the hallway, following the flickering light. Behind her, Mum is rousing Rachel, who mumbles incomprehensively. The rest of the family is already under the kitchen table, on the big mattress off Mum and Dad's bed. Ian is wrapped up in a sheet, despite the heat and is working his way through a packet of *Nice* biscuits. He shines a torch on his cheek so it goes blood red, pulls a ghastly face at his sister. Jodie finds a smile inside after all. It actually looks kind of fun.

Dad is lying on his side, fiddling with the radio. He's only picking up snatches in between static and the racket outside —*town receiving a battering with winds gusting from the centre at 230 kilometres per hour*— so he rotates the wire aerial, mumbling. He looks up at Jodie, nods. His mouth stretches upwards at the corners ever so slightly, but his eyes reflect no light in the candlelight. The girl looks down at her bare toes.

Mum totters down the hallway, half supporting Rachel, who is sleep muzzy. The oldest daughter crawls in beside her brother, then passes out again, the way only an almost-teenager can do under these conditions. Jodie's eyes are hot and bright in the soupy air, not sleepy at all. She tries lying down, but her feet are up hard against the table leg and she wonders if she will ever sleep again. She sits up, perches on the edge of the mattress for a moment, contemplating. Something is missing. The dilemma is slippery and she has to concentrate, until it appears bright in her mind; her Travel Sindy doll has been left behind in the drawer. The words, clean and loud, are out of her mouth before she can think about it properly.

‘I need my Travel Sindy doll.’ Mum is puzzled and looks at her husband. The movement of his head is barely perceptible. Emily shrugs back at him.

'If I had a doll I reckon I'd want it now, too. Be quick, love.' Mum turns her attention to the cassette player, fiddles about trying to record the wind. She wants to send a tape back to England because the relatives will never believe how loud it is, otherwise.

Jodie smiles gratefully, takes the torch from her brother and picks her way past the candles surrounding the brave and tiny camp. The walls down the hallway stretch fifty feet high as she warily trains the torch up them. She is in a tunnel, winding far away from the safety of her family, and, in order to reassure herself, has to swing the beam behind her to check their proximity. She tells herself she is acting like a baby, and trains the light forward determinedly. Its beam picks out a large shiny cockroach up on the wall, *the absolute worst type with wings*. It vibrates then dives towards the light; whirrs in her ear and skitters raspily against her check. Revolted, Jodie swipes at the little monster, which lands on the lino. Half panicked, she stomps at it but the thing scuttles away under the skirting board. She pauses to breathe, feeling her heart thrumming in her chest. Her body’s reaction is out of sorts with the extent of the threat, and yet perfectly normal on this less than ordinary night. *Spiders, snakes, bees, ants—yep, all okay. Those I can deal with. Cockroaches—forget it.*

Jodie grasps the handle of her bedroom door before her nerve deserts her altogether. It feels oddly stiff, as though an unseen prankster is leaning against it from the other side. *Enough!* The girl pushes full weight against the invisible obstruction, an almost panic giving her strength. The door gives inward with an audible sigh and she takes an involuntary step into the room to steady herself.

The din from outside is even louder in here and she shuts the door behind her instinctively. The room closes in on itself and she picks her way across a floor now strangely unfamiliar. Jodie sinks down onto one knee, grasps the right handle set into the middle drawer of the dressing table and pulls it open, but it must be the wrong one because she can only see clothes. She pulls on the top drawer without wasting time closing the one beneath, but the polished wood has swollen. She sets the torch down and grips both handles, wriggling the drawer. It opens, but crookedly, and jams halfway open. She pulls harder on the left handle, wriggling to balance the drawer out, *phew finally...*

The world bursts apart…blinks out.

Back at the camp, they hear an unnatural popping noise and the wind is impossibly loud, pouring down a tunnel. Mum looks at Dad, mouths, *Jodie!* He's on his feet and down the hallway in a second, in slow motion. Shoulders open the sealed door, ploughs into the decompressed room Joan has breached. The torch lies on the floor, the finger of its beam pointing out the metal girder hammered through the window. *Look what she's done now.* Steel cyclone wire from its frame is wrapped around the near end like a band-aid. Gerald ducks his head down as flying bits of glass and debris attack, stinging, biting. Rain like liquid metal pelts in sideways through the open wound of the window. The lino floor, together with everything solid and familiar in the room, is now slippery and treacherous and a potential hazard. Jodie's metal-framed bed is upended, the dressing table fallen forward. With a lurch of comprehension, he sees his daughter's legs beneath, feet bare and glistening in the dim torchlight. The wind is ear-piercing now, masking his grunts as he hauls up the dresser. He props it with his back as he scrabbles in the mud and the water and the broken glass, trying to free her limp body, pick her up, make her safe. But she's wedged somehow—

The room lightens and Emily is there, solid, real. She kneels beside her husband in the slippery mess, grasping their daughter about the shoulders. She pulls firmly as he holds up the dresser. Jodie's long tiny form slides free and her mother picks her up, staggering only a little, then picks her way to the door. Gerald lets the furniture go behind her, the remains of the mirror smashing as it comes to rest for the last time.

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(And where in the world am I?). The girl walks on, the loose wet sand weighing her down… not at all. Her footsteps are effortless, her body weightless. She would run because she can, but is cautious in this strange terrain, so familiar and altered. She knows it's not real, surely all a dream, but never has a dream felt so real, so (all five senses). She can't wake herself up, no matter how hard she tries. She looks up and the sky is a massive dome. It is like being inside Nana's upended tea cup, for she always placed it upside-down on the saucer when she was finished. The ceiling above is opaque in patches and, if she stares too long towards the horizon, she can see a massive shadow up there. She wonders if her panic and fear have somehow taken on solid form, which is pounding against the dome walls (wailing, shrieking always) trying to get in. It is quite calm in here, but if (that thing) breaks through, everything will

be gone. She feels for the comforting voice in her mind, which is fainter and less certain than usual, but she can hear it, still. Right, Kid— multiple choice, then. Just like on 'It's Academic'. Question: Where in the world are you, exactly? Option a): Inside the Red Pipe. Option b): In the eye of the storm. Option c): Down the rabbit hole. *Choose carefully, kid, for all except three are absolutely right and then you'll never get home.*

***

'*Jodie!*' Ian kicks his way out of his sheet, sending the biscuit packet flying. Crumbs everywhere. His voice is louder than the wind, lancing Rachel's sleep. She is awake and rolling to her feet without conscious thought.

'*Where's* Jodie?' Adrenalin purges the drowsiness from her system. Rachel's voice is torn from her throat, the words hanging dry and cracked in the air.

'Mum and Dad—there was an, an *explosion.* In your room. They had to go get her.' Ian shouts without even noticing, waves down the hallway with the remaining little torch and starts to cry. His oldest sister moves next to him and puts her arm around his shoulders. She places her mouth close to his ear so he can hear her.

'They'll bring her back, don't worry. They're a good team when it really matters, I've seen them. We'll be okay.' The words come out dry on her tongue and she longs for a drink of cold water. They sit with the noise of the wind berating them, breathing in the warm thick air and waiting.

***

The girl keeps walking, for it makes little sense to do much else. The world is washed out to black-and-white like on the telly, but with razor sharp depth and clarity. She senses touches of mustard yellow and the ochre of iron ore dust and the bottomless blue of the diving pool, but the colours remain in the corner of her eye. If she tries to look at them square on, they flicker out and disappear.

The wide belt of sand between the dunes and the sea is buried beneath a soggy mess of rotting seaweed, but she can't smell it. The black ribbon extends down the beach as far as her

eyes can see. The dunes are almost all gone, razed flat. She turns her back to the sea and faces what should be south and what might be Sutherland Street, but the one or two houses she can make out amongst the grey are all but buried. Sand is piled up to the top of their windows and only the flat roofs show above. (How on earth will the people get out? Where are the people, anyway?). She turns a slow circle, taking in the complete vista of this strange version of her familiar place. There is no-one else here, no-one at all. She halts to the north, facing the sea. The reef appears hidden so the tide must be in, but the water is too dark to tell. Far out on the horizon, at the furthermost edge of the dome wall, she makes out six or seven tankers, their distinctive outlines both reassuring and worrying. They should have put out to sea by now, to face the storm hard on their anchors in the open water. She nears the water cautiously for a closer look and sees that the tide is neither in nor out. The water is instead trapped by reef denser than any she's ever seen. Black rocks pen in white-capped waves that are strangely quiet. There are big, inexplicable things trapped out there where the rock pools should be, leviathans with fins and tentacles that thrash about and break the outraged surface. The girl backs away slowly, breathing deep but not feeling the air in her lungs. This place is badly out of sorts, as Nana would say.

She's not looking where she's going, and her foot gets tangled up in something grasping, stinging. The girl falls, lands softly on the crusted sand. She kicks out frantically, trying to free her foot but there's something wrapped around it, something…hairy? She forces a closer look, revealing a knotted mass of netting, fishing line, hooks and sinkers. It has all spewed out of a rusted tackle box upended in the sand and the seaweed. She blows out a breath in frustration, flops down and doggedly untangles the mess from her limb. There's a fishhook stuck in the hollow of her foot, but luckily, it has not gone in too deep and the barb is still visible. These things can be really nasty. Wincing, she gently wiggles it free, holds it up to inspection. The cruel little object is quite dull, coated with rust, iron ore dust or possibly, dried blood. She checks her feet then, first one, and then the other. There is a small hole in her left foot where the hook sank in, and it hurts, but only a little bit. There is no blood, none at all. There should be, surely? She leans back on her hands and stares at her legs. Her feet feel cold and look white and slightly bloated. Toes like…little maggoty sausages. Dead things. She shudders, wriggles them violently and is relieved to see that they still move, if only a little. She is so tired.

(Am I dying?)

The Voice in her head is even further away—perhaps no longer inside her at all. She looks upwards to the domed sky you can see through and then it is lighter, glowing faintly from the outside. The Fear in the sky recedes from around the light just a little. A whisper, a slight breath of wind strokes her cheek and it is cooling, soothing…like a caress, or a kiss. She feels the dread coiled up inside her loosen and she dares to hope again.

Dawn is coming. Sit tight, kid. This night is almost over. You'll see.

***

'Out of the way, you two—move!' Emily appears out of the darkness, carrying Jodie like an oversized doll. Rachel and Ian dive off the mattress in a panic as their mother kneels and carefully lays the still form down. A dull *whump* reverberates down the hall as Gerald pulls the bedroom door shut, the relative quiet that follows strangely disconcerting. He returns to the dishevelled little camp, crouches down over his fallen daughter. He performs a cursory examination by torch and candlelight. Senior First Aid is a mandatory requirement of Gerald's job, but in these circumstances, he fears it may make no difference. He carries on nonetheless, the familiar checklist holding back the panic and the anger and the dismay. She is bleeding, seemingly all over, but the cuts appear superficial. Her skin is cool and clammy to the touch. He cups his hand under her chin, feeling for breath against his palm. It is weak and barely discernible, but she breathes. He exhales in relief, unaware that he was holding his breath. He finds a pulse at her neck but it is thready and weak. He gently raises an eyelid and shines the smallest torch into her eye but the pupil barely dilates. With gentle fingers he explores her head all over, lingering just above the back of her neck. His hand comes away dry, but he does not like what he feels. *Some sort of trauma to the back of her head with possible internal bleeding. She needs medical attention, right now.* Gerald appears calm as he gently eases her onto her side into the recovery position. Only Emily notices the slight shudder through his frame as he gently works a pillow beneath his daughter's legs.

'She's not good. We have to get her to hospital.' He doesn't raise his voice above the wind, but he doesn't have to. Ian's been holding in his sobs for fear of distracting his father and making him boil, but now they escape and he cries quietly. Rachel's eyes grow blurry and hot and she holds him close again, rocking slightly. She looks over at her little sister, so still and pale

in a way she didn't think was possible. *Like Tinkerbell after drinking the poison in place of Peter and her light gets snuffed out.* Mum gets up, returns with a flannel and a bowl of lukewarm water. She soaks the cloth and goes to work gently sponging Jodie's scratched face and limbs. The water in the bowl quickly turns dark in the candlelight and she goes off to change it, but the same thing soon happens again. Rachel can see what her mother does not grasp, that the blood from the cuts and scratches on her own hands is contaminating the water as much as Jodie's superficial wounds. She says nothing, but gets up to fetch a jug of water for them all to drink. Mum continues, gently sponging Jodie's face with the flannel. She's murmuring softly, in a tone that Rachel has never heard. She is close enough to catch some of the words. *This night can't last forever, love. Hold on for the dawn, it's coming. Wait and see.*

Gerald goes into the living room and has to force the rising panic and darkness within to *back off*. He thinks he might simply wrench the front door open and run outside. That would be the easiest thing to do. His daughter needs help, needs it now, but how is that possible with *that thing* going on outside? He breathes in and holds it a moment, places his palm against the front door. The wood is warm, vibrating—he can feel the intensity of the storm that wants to get in. He recalls the last update on ABC Northwest radio, before the signal cut out. Just before they lost Jodie. C*yclonic winds gusting north to north easterly to a maximum of 208 kilometers locally. Barometric pressure at 966 hPa.* Gerard turns and threads his way back through the darkened house, ignoring his family under the kitchen table. It takes all he has just to think, to stay calm…to figure out a way to get his daughter, perhaps all of them, through this. He closes the laundry door behind him, checks the back door. The wood does not hum to his touch as the front door did, but the cyclone is far from done. It seems to grow in ferocity, if that were possible. Their basic little duplex is strongly constructed and has withstood many cyclones in the past, but now he fears it will be torn from its foundations. The walls creak and seem to give slightly with each renewed wind gust.

Gerald twists the locking button in the middle of the doorknob, stops breathing as he eases the door open. It does not wrench from his grip and pin him to the wall as he half expected, but opens easily. He turns the key in the wire framed screen door beyond, takes two steps into the disorientating world outside. The duplex sits parallel to the sea and, right now, the rear of the house faces the lee side of the storm. For the moment, the tiny patio provides a tenuous bubble from which he surveys the cyclone beyond—as best as he can by the thready torchlight. *Unless*

we get the eye. The unrelenting din is like nothing he has ever heard or felt. *Like standing on the tarmac ten foot from a jumbo jet taking off.* The hairs on his scalp, forearm, the back of his neck, prickle and stand up. The air is unnaturally charged.

The wind is visible in the beam, and he sees that it swallows the pelting rain that is unable to make itself heard. *Nothing but black and water and wind out there.* From what he can see of his backyard, there are strange shapes strewn about all over. Tentatively, he extends his hand out past the calm of the patio into the wind. He grunts in surprise as the limb is gleefully grasped and bent forcibly backwards. Unnerved, Gerald jerks his arm back in as a sheet of roofing tin arcs past, assuming the form of a great metallic bat. It crashes against the fence and flaps, shining and maniacal in the torchlight a moment or two, before catching the wind and resuming its demonic flight. A rhythmic smashing of *something* occurs to his left, but he cannot make out the source in the dark or gauge how far away the threat is. He retreats back inside, mechanically closes and locks up both doors. There is no way, no way at all to evacuate in these conditions. It would be suicide. *But Jodie's probably dead if you don't try.* He takes in all the weight and responsibility and forces it down, into the panic and darkness that wants to dominate. Right now, this minute…not a chance.

He goes back to his family under the kitchen table, pulls his wife away, *Just for a moment, Emily.* He leans in close so she can hear, tells her about the conditions outside, the flying debris and the wind strength, even the great metallic bat.

'We can't take her out there, it would be suicide. We can't go and get help, either. Not yet. We need to keep her quiet and watch over her until dawn; then we'll try. We can't risk anyone else—Jodie would hate that.' The last is the wrong thing and yet the only right thing to say.

Emily's eyes are black in the candlelight, regarding him with loathing. Her voice is low. 'Our child is…*dying* and you say we just have to *wait*?'

'Only until dawn—less than an hour by now. With first light, we at least have a chance.' He hesitates. 'Or until we get the eye. Whichever comes first.'

Emily pulls herself up, paces into the front room and touches the front door, just as Gerald did. She follows his path into the laundry, and he feels the house sigh faintly as the rear doors are opened once more. The noise outside is louder and Ian leaps up, once more on the verge of panic.

'Where's Mum going, Dad? She's not going *out* in that, is she? She won't be able to come back!' Gerald doesn't know and isn't sure he could stop her anyway. Then what would he do—go after her? Leave the kids to themselves in this storm, with one badly injured? There are more decisions to face tonight than he thought possible.

He follows Emily to the screen door and watches her form dark against the criss-crossed background. She is safe in the little alcove, but he fears she may tear away into the chaos beyond at any moment. He sees her extend a wondering arm into the wind as he did, to pull it back from the mad embrace. She teeters between the two worlds, either of which may force her to leave her daughter *all of them* behind. She wilts in a way that is barely discernible, but Gerald opens the door and pulls her back. She does not resist, but is stiff in his grasp. He looks at her face and her eyes are red-rimmed and very bright, her gaze far away. He locks up the doors and propels her back into the kitchen, all the while fearing that, if she trips, she will fall and smash into tiny pieces. *Willow pattern china.*

He steers his wife back onto the mattress, where she kneels and takes Jodie's clammy hand in her own. Their other two children go to her, drape their arms around their mother awkwardly. This is not a *touchy feely* family in what passes for normal circumstances and they don't get a lot of practice at this sort of thing. The three of them mould into one indistinct form in the soft light. They cry noiselessly as the candle flames shudder with each new gust of wind hammering the thin walls around them.

Gerald sits nearby on a kitchen chair, watching his family. He hasn't seen them in a long time. He feels the pressure in the room, the weight of the entity outside seeking a way in. He sees the roof lift, the walls caving in and deliberately blanks his mind out. He wonders if it will ever end. No radio, no power, no telephone, no way out just yet. They wait, for there is nothing else to do.

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The girl is walking again, for no reason and with no destination. She's heading east towards Cooke Point, but that could be missing, too. She passes a huge dark mound that doesn't seem to belong, even in this strange place. It is covered in seaweed but she feels that it is somehow watching her. She slows to look, standing undecided. She is ready to run if it moves, for it seems that it must. Nothing happens, so she circles it warily. Something about the shape

seems familiar. Disconcertingly curious, she takes up a stick and pokes away at the seaweed, moving independently of her instincts which beg her (leave it alone and Keep Going!). Common sense matters here not at all, where there are no adults to ask, nor to answer to. She pokes and digs away at the great pile of seaweed and sand, suddenly defiant and annoyed.

She drops the stick and backs away as a large clump of the rotting covering falls away. Beneath is a great eye, oozing black jelly and swarming with tiny sand flies. She gets it then; it's a shark, a big one—probably a Great White. Most of the encircling seaweed is actually fishing net. It is as twisted up as her foot was from the tackle box, but all over. It never had a chance. She steps back, trying to take the whole thing in. The monster's great weight has collapsed in the middle, his tail bent over and obscured. He is huge, probably as big as the shark in the new film 'Jaws' *that she is not allowed to see.*

She steps back a little further. The black eye regards her balefully. Not human, not animal, not real at all. Her wariness of the shark has ebbed and she can see it swimming free in the deepest water. Miss Moone taught them that the Great White is an apex predator, like a lion is in Africa. Not really man-eaters at all—they don't like the taste of people and much prefer seals. Usually, when a person is attacked it is by accident and, even then, the shark just bites a bit off for a taste and spits the rest out. *(All the kids went* Ewwwww! *at that). She hears her teacher's voice, as clear as if she was back in the classroom:* Not that Miss Moone wouldn't run on water if she ever saw one, kids! *The girl smiles, for the memory feels real, in a way that she no longer does. Miss Moone hates the ocean, especially in Port Hedland. She calls it* Brown and Horrible. *Once, she told the class about the time when Mrs Van Uden (Rachel's teacher) and her husband John took Miss Moone out in their boat, just off Finucane Island, to show her what she was missing. Well, Miss Moone fell in and became Mr Van Uden's first* Man Overboard. *This* Thing *came out of the water at her, like* this! *and Miss Moone went,* Oooooh! *It was a giant turtle and she'd startled it and nearly had a heart attack.*[8] *Miss Moone was* Never, No Way going back in that water, kids. *She had a way of telling things that made your sides ache.*

The girl pulls in the memory and hugs it tight, almost smiling and nearly warm. She is still (whole) as long as she has her stories to listen to. She straightens, takes in the net and the seaweed and understands that it was a horrible way to die. She's clutching her arm now; it hurts. She looks down and sees imprints of grey and blue there, precise and inevitable. Five of them,

[8] This incident actually happened, as described by Tina Moone in her interview of 7 October, 2011.

encircling her wrist and forearm. Dad did that. She looks up at the sad jelly eye of the shark. And Joan did this.

Neither of them meant to.

The girl remembers her name then, for it had escaped her mind until now. Jodie. Jodie-san. Joh-dee. Little girl. Sis. She repeats her name aloud, in all the different pronunciations and forms she can remember. There are more, for she is many things to many people and all of the fragments are slippery in her mind.

(Joh-dee) sets off again, loping along in the strange pace that takes no effort here. She doesn't look back until the sand and the seaweed turn hard beneath her feet. She finds herself clambering over great sheets of black volcanic rock. She thinks that she may have reached Rock of Ages, but these formations are too vast and black. She scrambles up onto a ledge, looks around. This world is darkening to match the rock. The wind picks up but she cannot feel it, there is only a dry heat on her skin.

Beneath the wind is a sound that may have been there all along but now forces its way forward. The scrabbling grows more persistent and she is forced to cast fearful eyes skyward. The (Dark Mass? Thing?) up there—she'd all but forgotten about it, how was that possible—is trying to get in again and now the membrane of the Dome is failing. She watches as the sky above melts away into a wild creature that stretches into the horizon beyond, a spectre with seaweed hair the colour of copper. It looks down and spots the girl who is neither awake nor dreaming, sees her with its black jelly eye and a buzz-saw blade mouth that starts to rotate. It raises a terrible clawed hand and calls forth the wind, sweeps it into the calm recess of this world. Great walls of seaweed are sent whirling skyward as saltwater is sucked up into immense funnels stretching high into the firmament. The girl watches in consternation as the shark is caught up like a small toy and flung out beyond the rocks, far out to sea. The tiny grey tankers on the horizon levitate high into the air and are smashed back into the dark water far below.

This terrible work done, it casts its gaze directly at her, leans in for a closer look. Jodie screams, turns to run. It wants to suck away all her memories, her stories. She runs to save all that she has and all that she is.

Chapter Seven: Desperation

It's [Cyclone Joan] about 35 kilometres [away]…it won't matter now. It's going so close they [Port Hedland] are going to get the full force of the winds. They will get pretty much the maximum at landfall.
Cyclone Warning Centre, Daily News, p.3, Monday December 8, 1975.

I remember [during Cyclone Joan]…about five o'clock in the morning, and the wind was howling, absolutely howling. And what can you do? You've got four people, a cat and a dog..we went and sat on the back verandah, looking at it on the lee side..looking out on the town, very much as it was then…[with a] Scotch and ice, and having smoked oysters on savory bikkies. We're like, Gawd, who's roof is *that* going past?! [Laughs ruefully]. We were very, very lucky...
John Van Uden, interview 19 July 2009

Monday, 8 December, 1975
5.26am First light
73A Crawford Street

'*Mu-um!* What's *wrong* with her?' Rachel's voice is high and thin, cutting above the wind. 'Is she dying?'

Gerald deserts his post at the front room window, where a faintly brightening sky reveals glimpses of a red and grey world bearing only a passing resemblance to the night before. Fear and adrenalin dissipate exhaustion as he sees his daughter, realizes with a sickening lurch that she is convulsing. Jodie's skin gleams as though oiled in the grey light as her body spasms uncontrollably. Her eyelids are open a crack but there is only white showing beneath. Her hair is slick and dark. There is little resemblance left to their bright daughter.

Pablo patters out from his hidey hole under the grog cabinet against the wall. He raises his tiny muzzle distastefully, smells sweat and metal and fear. He wrinkles his face and growls low, inaudible above the wind and the panic. He squats, puddles and skulks back to his basket. Gerald frowns, a detached part of his newly compartmentalised mind vowing to *skin that useless mut alive when this is all over.* Ian follows his gaze and reads that look, shuffles mechanically over with a box of tissues to mop up the mess. He keeps a fearful eye on his sister.

Gerald grasps his wife firmly by the shoulders. She is bent over the juddering form, trying to pin her down, to still the convulsive movements.

'No, Emily—leave her. You can't stop it.' He is amazed at his calm. His wife jerks away, wild-eyed. She lashes at him, her fear and exhaustion needing an outlet.

'*Leave* her?! Leave her to die? We have to *do* something, we can't wait anymore! She's *dying,* can't you see we're losing her—' Emily's voice gives out and she ineffectually tries to restrain her daughter through tears hot and blurring. Gerald leaves his hands on her shoulders, turns to address his eldest daughter, who has backed away and looks on warily.

'Rachel, I want you to watch the second hand on the wall clock. We need to time the seizure.' She nods, shines the torch on the wood grain face on the opposite wall. The beam trembles and her lips move, reciting the seconds.

Beneath his fingers, Emily trembles and tries to retain her composure. 'What if she bites or swallows her tongue?' She extends hesitant fingers towards the grey lips, now flecked with foam.

'No, she won't.' Gerald hears the first-aid coordinator's dry recital. *The days of a seizure patient biting down on a stick so they won't swallow their tongue went out with slashing a snakebite wound and sucking out the poison.* He kneels down, reaches past his wife and scoops his daughter up and over, carefully positioning her in the middle of the bed. She is hot to the touch, her nightie soaked with sweat.

Moments seep by as they watch her, locked in fearful, hopeless fascination. When it seems as though her slight frame can handle no more, the unnatural jerking finally slows, stills. She lies limp and tiny in the middle of the large mattress and there is no movement, none at all. Gerald checks her fearfully, verifies that life is present still, although surely too faint. Her eyes appear ringed in grey and purple. *Panda eyes.* He wonders that he hadn't noticed this symptom before. She is quite still and yet the rims of her eyes are damp. A tear wells up in the corner of her eye and rolls down her cheek. Emily's voice is breaking.

'She's crying, poor love.'

Gerald catches the droplet on the tip of his finger, raises it to his lips. Not salty, but slick and tasteless. Not a tear at all, but something much worse. He says nothing, but rolls her gently onto her side, nods approvingly as Emily brings the jug full of water and the flannel to resume her sponging vigil.

'That's the way—she's much too hot. Her high temperature could have brought on the fit. Try and cool her down, but take it slowly. We have to avoid shocking her.' He looks over at Rachel, who draws a breath.

'Four minutes, thirty-five seconds, plus maybe thirty seconds before I started timing.' Gerald nods. Too long. He doubted she would survive another.

'Write that down and the time it stopped. We'll need to let the doctor know.' *Doctor…yes, but how to get her to one? Enough! Enough, now.* He gets to his feet, roams the living room one last time. The door vibrates under his touch less than it did; the wind doesn't seem to be easing off outside, but perhaps it is changing direction a little? Gerald tells his family to *Stay here while I go get help*. He paces into the laundry, performs the now repetitive unlocking ritual. Once outside, the little alcove provides tenuous sanctuary still, although now the receding darkness permits a level of inventory. The sight pulls him up momentarily.

Their cricket pitch backyard is suddenly huge, for the asbestos fence is gone on all three sides. Their above-ground pool, such as it was, is completely gone, water, metal frame, plastic lining, pump and all. All that remains is a barely discernible, circular patch of sand to confirm that it had ever been there at all. The source of the crashing he worried at earlier is now clear; to the right, next door's brick barbeque is all but demolished, along with their privacy. Gerald watches as three more red bricks are torn away from their concrete anchorage and tossed up onto the roof, smashing the tiles above. *Look what I can do.* Gerald's gaze travels further upwards and he is both sickened and fascinated at the sight of the debris from houses and lives cluttering the lower atmosphere, flying about in the wind like things possessed. Inanimate objects rejoiced hysterically in the brief but deadly life granted them in a night when the world has gone mad.

John Bassett next door had installed a below ground concrete pool to go with his bricked-in barbeque and was immensely proud of his remodelled back yard. Now Gerald can see that the brick pool surround went the way of the barbeque hours ago, swiped clean away. There is only a half empty hole in the ground remaining. He is brought up short as a thin blue funnel of chlorinated pool water is drawn upwards in a clear line, streaming high up and over the roof behind. *How about that, then? And I'm not done yet.*

Neither am I, you facking bitch. Gerald doesn't know if he spat the words aloud or if they reverberated in his head, but he moves anyway. He gives up the artificial calm of his shelter, plunges out along the external common wall between the duplex halves. He's forgotten about the rain, *pelting* rain, swallowed up in the wind and spat out sideways. Now it stings his face as he continues down the strange path opened up by the abrupt removal of the dividing fence. The external wall's red brown surface is punctuated by cracks and holes, exposing beams and wiring

beneath. *Good job the power failed hours ago.* He keeps getting pulled up by a sideways swipe of the wind. Each onslaught forces him to stand still, crouching down against the wall and covering his head with his arms until it relents. A piece of debris *maybe a roof tile* cracks him on an exposed forearm and he swears, the words sucked away even as they leave his mouth.

A few minutes and the longest time later, he is at the Kokkinos' back door. He hammers with bloodied knuckles, screams to get in above the din. They can't possibly hear him and now he has to boil over and give in, to *smash the wall down then they'll hear me alright*. There is plenty of weaponry strewn about, so he takes up a piece of metal pipe and batters the obstruction, over and over. The fibre cement surface cracks, then a hole opens up in the wall, widening with each blow. He meets solid resistance and starts a fresh onslaught lower down. He no longer hears the wind above the pounding in his head as the absolute necessity to *Do something!* consumes him.

Then Phil is there, catching his arm to stem the onslaught. His neighbour leans his face in tight with eyes almost closed against the wind, bawls, *Come in man, now.* Gerald makes out the contorted features etched into the grey light, wants to *smash them too* in this detached and dark place in his head that he had fought to keep closed this long night. He is strong, but so is Phil and it is a battle that one has the heart for. Gerald drops his weapon, shoulders shaking as his neighbour guides him inside.

Inside is a sanctuary that makes his ears ring in the relative stillness. The Kokkinos family has also evacuated to the middle of the house where there is a mattress ringed by cyclone debris: extinguished candles still waxy and smoking, a couple of torches, a transistor radio, a plastic jug of water, a few of Alice's dolls. Their duplex half is set against a street corner, leaving the far side of the house relatively exposed. The sideways rain has gained small but significant purchase throughout the night; it crept in through the eaves, around the air-conditioning vents and windows, or perhaps simply under the door. It is hard to tell until daylight, but as long as the roof holds, they'll be okay. There are shiny dark patches up the front room walls, extending to the ceiling. *Maneki Neko*, the lucky cat, no longer waves from his shelf on the wall. A few centimetres of water puddles the kitchen and seeps into the hallway, but relentless mop and bucket duty and sandbagging with every single sheet and towel they can find has protected their mattress island so far. A small, untidy bundle in the middle confirms that Alice has long given in to exhaustion. She slumbers on, blissfully oblivious to the chaos of this night. Gerald compares

her sweet rhythmic breaths to the unnatural sleep of his own child and looks away, concentrating.

Momoko's eyes gleam in the soft grey light as she approaches warily from behind her husband. She takes in this wild person so recently her neighbour, flits away to fetch anything still dry. Gerald declines to sit, for there is so much to do, in no time at all. His voice is hoarse as he tells of the hellish night playing out still, just next door. The words are purged from his mouth like water forced from the lungs of a drowning man. Phil places the blanket Momoko hands him about his shoulders as she opens up the first aid kit. In the dull light he looks bad and will look much worse in full daylight. The whites of his eyes are dark and there is a nasty gash down one arm that is yet to clot and will need stitching. One eye is swollen and threatens to close. Every exposed centimetre of skin appears scratched, as though he was fool enough to stride through a shower of broken glass. In all likelihood, he had.

Gerald distractedly waves away Momoko, gently insistent with gauze and antiseptic cream, until she is able to comprehend Jodie's condition. Then she is quite still, a tiny gasp escaping her lips. Momoko forms a solid shadow, breathing threadily. Gerald senses her listening intently, then discards her presence from his mind.

The colleagues lapse into work practices without conscious decision. Calculated analysis is the only way that Gerald can function now, as it permits him to push down the panic and fear and focus on solving the problem. The Civic Centre is the obvious place to take Jodie. The council offices have been set up as the town's emergency control centre, so not only is it a designated evacuation point, but they should also have response crews ready to go. It is also less than half a mile from the front driveway—although Joan's presence outside has lengthened the distance many times over. It is a journey Phil has made, and dreaded making, many times in his head in the lead-up to this night. Joan is his first cyclone and he has done his homework. He didn't like the chances of his family riding out the storm in this little box of a home and visited the council building in the days before, to firm up his backup plan. He was also able to monitor the radio updates closely, before the transmission finally cut out sometime after midnight.

'The Civic Centre will be busy—they already have evacuees from the caravan parks and across town. There will be civil defence, SEC personnel….access to two-way radio, emergency channels.' The more Phil talks, the calmer Gerald seems to be, so he keeps going, despite the

hoarseness of his voice over the relentless din. He runs through his backup plan and it is the best chance they have.

Chapter Eight: Preparation

Joan crossed the coast at 6.16am, 52 kilometres due west of Port Hedland, with winds at 80 knots (or 148km/h) gusting to 110 knots (201 km/h).
Daily News, December 8, 1975, p. 3

Although these results cannot be accepted without some reservation, they do imply that over the land a maximum mean 10-minute wind speed of at least 150 to 160 km/h occurred and that the maximum gusts were at least 215 to 230 km/h. The maximum over-water 10-minute mean winds in the cyclone near landfall are estimated to have been in the range 175 to 185 km/h with maximum gusts of the order of 245 to 260 km/h.
Bureau of Meteorology Report, Regional Office Perth: Cyclone Jan December 1975 (p. 19, July 1979)

6.23am Dawn

The girl tries to run but there are only steep black rocks in front of her now. She tries to scrabble up but the surface is too slippery. She falls back down and sprawls in the seaweed and sand, the wind whipping her hair about her face until she can no longer see. She calls on the voice in her head for help, but it's silent—left her for the first time ever, just when she needed it most. All but giving in to the panic and the darkness, she searches for some shred of courage to cling on to. She has heroes in her life, but who among them is strong and mad and fearless enough to face the Crazy Lady in the sky?

She pulls up short then, for it is not Barry Godley or Grandad Martin or Phil Kokkinos she finds, now that things are the most dire, ever. It is Gerald Cadogan, her Dad. He is angry. She sees him taking charge of the entire port operations after the strike, and everyone listens to him because he is angry, but he is right. He is pulling up the Foreman because his loaders are not working to capacity, then arguing with the pilot because the tugs can't be ready thirty minutes early. He strides up the gangplank of a massive tanker as the crew scramble to pull it up behind him and set out as soon as he is on board. He pounds on Mr Barnett's door because his daughter broke her arm after he stole their washing machine and he is angry about that. Now he is angry at the Lady in the Sky for frightening his daughter and he will Facking Fix her.

The girl sits up then, in the crusted sand with the screaming wind pelting her with salty rain. She pulls sodden hair out of her face with numb fingers. The Lady is very close now and

her rotating mouth is huge below a leaky black eye, swallowing the entire sky and trying to swallow her, too. She is so angry, but so is Dad. Jodie pulls herself up against the wind pounding in from all directions; stands on legs she can no longer feel. It is better than lying down, than giving in to the dark where she will lose herself forever. She closes her eyes, channeling the strange courage that nips behind at the fear and adrenalin coursing through her body. She pulls it through, makes it bigger, makes it her shield. She's not going anywhere and there's no place to go. Full steam ahead on her anchors, going nowhere. Facing the storm with her Dad.

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They are almost ready. Emily is in the back of the Landcruiser, arranging pillows and blankets in an effort to give her daughter the smoothest ride possible. Gerald had explained their evacuation plan to her and there was *No way absolutely no way and that's final* that she was going to let them go without her. He was not happy, but didn't blame her, either. He also agreed that his wife's presence on the back seat to help minimize Jodie's movement and keep her secure would free him to sit up front and help Phil navigate the unknown debris field out there. Momoko is to be left in charge of the remaining children in the Cadogan half of 73 Crawford Street. Phil would return as soon as Jodie was in safe hands.

It was decided that 73A, despite the breach of one room by Joan, remained a safer bet than 73B, with its damp walls and wet floors and exposed exterior wall. Alice had wailed fearfully at being abruptly awoken and wrapped up in a sleeping bag for the trip next door, but her mother told her *We go through Big Wind, go see Joh-dee, Hokay?* and she was good to go. By then, the wind had barely dropped but had at least altered direction slightly, so that the full force was no longer pounding the front of the house. Gerald commandeered a thick bedspread as cover and ushered Momoko and a bundled-up Alice across the front of the duplex, hugging the verandahs and keeping an eye out for inward-flying debris. Emily let them in, but the door swung sharply inwards as she did so, almost hitting her as it slammed against the wall. Gerald had to help close it, once they were all inside. Emily's eyes had widened as she took in the battered appearance of her husband, but she said nothing. Rachel and Ian leapt up at the new arrivals, but there was only a cursory reunion before their father returned to Jodie's side. Emily

updated her condition: no further seizure or obvious deterioration, but no improvement, either. By now, Gerald was almost certain she was in a coma and he felt cold inside. Momoko sat down on the end of the mattress with Alice on her lap and they were both still, watching.

Meanwhile, Phil had tossed every pillow and blanket they had left, as well as a rolled-up swag for good measure, into the rear of the Landcruiser. He had to shield his head whilst ducking around the front of the vehicle to lock in the front hubs to engage four-wheel drive. He slid into the front seat and turned over the engine, set it in gear and ran the Cruiser partly down the sloping driveway, before backing up to angle it as close as possible to the Cadogans' front door. This formed a tunnel of sorts and it would have to do. Phil determinedly remained on auto-pilot for this entire operation, but the reality of leaving his family under these conditions gnawed at him. Of course, he had no choice—there is no room for all of them in the heavily loaded vehicle, and, for all he knew, it was safer to stay here. A phrase from the 'Cyclone Aware' council flier he inadvertently committed to memory kept flitting into his head, lazy but insistant: *Almost all deaths from cyclones have been caused by flooding (tidal surges) or people moving outside their house during a cyclone*. That may well be, but all he knew was that, if he did not do everything possible, right now, to help their little friend Jodie, his wife would never again look at him the way she did now. Momoko would see him as something less, and so would he.

The room exhales and the muted din outside becomes a roar as Phil pushes in the front door. Gerald goes over to help close it after him. Alice is fretting over the still form of her friend. She pats Jodie's cheek gently while making the toddler-English-Japanese-Greek babble that her mother seems to understand, even with all the noise. *Paw, paw Joh-dee.* Alice looks sorrowfully from Jodie to her mother. Momoko nods at her in agreement, saying what sounds to Ian like *Yah, Joh-dee sick. Sleeping sick. Very bad, Daddies get help.*

Phil smoothes back his sodden hair and goes over to his wife, places wet hands on her shoulders and squeezes reassuringly. She turns and smiles as he leans down and brushes her lips with his by way of *good luck and see you soon.* Public displays of affection are rare and, in any other circumstances, she would glow. Now it just seems to emphasize the severity of their situation. Momoko gently tucks the blanket around the girl's small form, pulling it up around her head protectively. Her best friend since arriving in this strange and empty and beautiful place. She kisses Jodie's cold cheek, blinking away traitorous tears. She whispers, 'Arashi no ch□sana tomodachi ni chokumen shite iru.' *Face the storm, little friend.*

Then Gerald scoops up his daughter, tucks her into his chest and she is gone, whisked away. Alice starts to cry and Phil cups his daughter's cheek a moment with his hand before ducking off to open the front door for the last time. The two men head out into the storm and now Ian and Rachel close it behind them, pushing hard with flat palms. They shut the storm out and Rachel leans back heavily against the flimsy door, head bowed.

Momoko pulls her wailing little daughter into her arms and rocks gently, stroking her thick wavy hair and humming under her breath. It makes a comforting vibration that Alice can feel, even if she can't hear it. The storm seems to have become embedded in their consciousness, so that no one can remember what silence sounds like. Pablo tracks out of his basket and climbs up onto the mattress, curling up in the small hollow recently vacated by Jodie. He whimpers as he does so, seeking the warmth and comforting scent.

Ian tries to watch the Dads out of the window, his heart pounding. He peers through the diamond shapes of the cyclone mesh, squinting to see past the red-smeared glass. It should be bright daylight out there but it is like watching the telly with the brightness knob turned down, black and white and all washed out. Both Dads are braced up against the storm but they have some shelter of sorts from the cruiser and the verandah. The vehicle's back door closest to the house is open and Phil keeps an eye out as Dad carefully but swiftly passes his bundle over to Mum on the back seat. Ian can see her head and extended arms as she guides his sister inside. Dad presses the door shut and follows Phil, who scrambles over the passenger seat to the driver's side. Rachel gets up to join Ian at the window, but Momoko keeps on rocking, rocking. Eyes half closed, humming her silent tune.

Inside the Cruiser, Phil's eyes flick about the interior in a final check of seatbelts and windows. Jodie shares the middle lap sash with her mother, adjusted to the fullest length and looped around them both. She lies across Emily's lap, supported by the bedding tucked in around her. Her legs are secured by the right passenger side seat belt. There seems little more they can do for her at this point. Phil turns the motor over, flicks on high beam, wipers and hazard lights for good measure, then puts it in 4WD gear. The journey required is barely five hundred metres but normal time and distance are grotesquely distorted. Slowly and gently, Phil eases the Landcruiser down the driveway, towards the Red Pipe.

Chapter Nine: Evacuation

I spent that cyclone [Joan] in the caravan, in the shed….I dragged my caravan into the shed and spent the cyclone there. It was rather horrifying, for someone who had never been through a cyclone before. The caravan and the shed were still there the next day, but the water was fairly deep…the town was pretty flooded. It was an experience, for someone who had only come to the town six months earlier. Very, very frightening.
Stan Martin, Mayor of Port Hedland, 15 July, 2009.

I was an SES Coordinator [for Cyclone Joan]. We didn't come home for two days. We all slept down the there at the SES quarters. It was massive.
Arnold Carter, Deputy Mayor of Port Hedland, 15 July, 2009.

Cast away from the relative shelter of the house, the wind punches into the cruiser from the south, rocking it to its axels. Phil grips the wheel as the vehicle shudders, and for a moment it seems they are going over. But every spare inch of floor space has been weighed down in preparation and the slightly lowered centre of gravity is just enough to extend them the edge they need. The Cruiser rocks slightly, but stays upright. Water and sand strafe the full length of the cruiser, scrabbling for purchase through any small crack or fissure. Emily draws in a breath and all but lifts Jodie up in her arms to try to cushion her from the movement. Phil nudges the wheel to the left, away from the beach, easing the vehicle into the tailwind. He brakes gently, allowing the forward movement to carry them up and over debris strewn over the driveway. The wheels spin on strewn corrugated sheet metal and the motor revs in protest, seeking purchase upon the slippery mess. The back wheels grip and they ease through it, then over a tree branch and what looks like roofing timber, black and cracked down the middle.

The cruiser levels up at the bottom of the driveway and they peer briefly into the wind tunnel lit up by the high beam. Gerald glances down at the fast-running water pouring down Crawford Street, prays it is not too deep. Emily gets a brief impression of *things* flying about in there but Phil doesn't stop to think about it now or his nerve will fail. He eases them into Ian's Red Pipe. They feel the wind and shallow current grip the Cruiser as it tries to keel abruptly to the south, but Phil keeps her angled in to the wind. His feet balance the brake and accelerator pedals and their progress is agonizingly slow as he battles the drift. If they go in too fast and the

flow proves too deep, water could splash up into the fan belt and spray the motor and it would be all over.

Gerald roars *Get down* and Phil feels a sudden weight on the back of his neck. Emily yelps and tightens her hold on Jodie as something small and dark drives in at unimaginable speed, striking the window where the driver's head was a moment ago. The window cracks as though hit by a bullet but the projectile glances off and the breach is not quite completed. The Cruiser is pummelled by a meteor shower. The debris may have been roofing tiles, or house bricks, refashioned as deadly projectiles in this strange place. The vehicle lurches abruptly to the left, drifting, and they are getting swept down into McGregor Street heading towards the flooded racetrack beyond. Gerald reaches over and grips the wheel, helps Phil wrestle back control. Phil revs it slightly, feeling the wheels bump solid ground, spin a bit more and grip under them once again. He releases a breath he didn't know he had been holding, sees the slope of embankment on the other side of the road, lit up in the headlights. He sits up and pumps the clutch, knocking her into second gear. Phil yells *Hold on* and floors it, bombing up the opposite retaining wall and out of the water. The back wheels spin at the top in the mud and the mess and they slip back down once, twice, and Phil's fighting the wheel and cursing in fluent Greek. He backs off on the pedal, allows her to slide back a little *not too much or they'll be back in it* before flooring it again. The wheels grip and the Cruiser bumps up and over and they are careering toward the relative safety of the pool. The headlights show up the mesh pool fence in their way but Phil's having none of that and crashes straight on through. They get a moment of respite from the onslaught as they veer behind the pool kiosk building, but there's debris all over the shop. Phil has to put the cruiser back to low gear and pick his way through it, ploughing on over the top of the smaller stuff. Then they are clear of the pool and straight into the Civic Centre car park, bumping down over the kerb and splashing down into the foot-deep chocolaty water inundating the whole area.

They have barely a hundred feet to go when a large tree branch lands *whumph* on the windscreen, blocking the wipers and all of Phil's view. Nor can he see out of his side window, which is already a concave mess of spiderweb cracks he can't get open. He roars at Gerald to *Do something I can't bloody see* so Gerald looks back at Emily and tells her to *Get down and cover up*! She hunkers over Jodie and pulls the sleeping bag up to shield them both. Gerald somehow thinks to grab the safety glasses off the dash before he cranks down his window. The inside of

the cruiser decompresses as the wind roars in and Gerald releases his seatbelt. He grasps the window frame, pulls himself up and half out of the vehicle in order to reach the obstruction. Cursing and grunting in the slippery pelting mess, he manhandles the branch off the windscreen, sees it slide away over the bonnet out of view. The wipers are history, but at least the driver can now see *something* out there. Phil floors it even as his passenger regains his seat. Gerald gives up the struggle to crank the window back up as there is barely thirty feet to go and they can make out the Civic Centre outline clearly now.

The shire offices have been designated as the town's emergency control centre, with SES volunteers placed on standby all night. Joan has been the greatest cyclone threat to the town since 1939 and preparations were thorough. Radio links had been established with the district hospital, the police, welfare services in South Hedland, administration in Newman and all mobile emergency units. Evacuation of the town's caravan parks and the Aboriginal community at Three Mile reserve commenced well before dusk the night before. As organized and professional as the operation was, its effectiveness has been severely hampered by the sheer ferocity and duration of the cyclone. Given the extended loss of normal communications, coupled with the inherently suicidal nature of moving about in such a storm, the mobilized emergency crews had little choice but to batten down and wait, together with the rest of the town. As it turned out, the control centre was to have its own cyclone emergency to deal with during the night.

The flat-roofed building houses the town's council chambers and it is two storeys high and over two hundred feet long. It previously seemed the most indestructible building in all of Hedland. Now, in eerie silhouette against a lightening sky, its roof is peeling off. The metal sheeting thrashes about like maniacal washing left on the line. Gerald barely registers the cluster of flashing lights in the car park below, before Phil pulls up close to the front entrance, leaning on his horn and narrowly missing a massive tip truck angled up against the kerb. People are milling about just inside the main foyer and the truck doors closest to the entrance are open. As they come to a full halt, a blanketed figure is pulled up into the cab by a fluoro-vested SEC worker. Gerald processes the scene and is stunned as realization hits. *God Almighty, they are evacuating the evacuation centre.* He looks back at his wife, still cradling their daughter. Her pale face appears to be floating in the dull light. He wrenches open his door as emergency workers reach the Landcruiser.

Gerald bawls at them over the din. ‘Little girl in the back—we have to get her to hospital, *now!* She’s badly hurt.’

Phil slumps a little in his seat as half a dozen SEC workers swarm the cruiser, cracking open the doors. They unstrap Jodie and carefully pass her down, then help Emily out behind her. Gerald is there already and carries her the final few feet, surrounded by helmeted figures in orange overalls. Phil pushes open the driver’s side door and is surprised when his legs almost give way as he lands in the ankle-deep water. Someone is there to steady him but he shrugs off the supporting arm offered. He is not staying long.

The interior of the Civic Centre is ordered chaos. Rudimentary beds are set up in the middle of the carpeted entrance hallway. The reception area has been converted into a temporary communications centre but links between emergency services are currently limited to short-wave and two-way radio contact. At the last report, the power generator at the Cooke Point exchange was out after the exchange building had been unroofed. The remaining staff were working in two foot of water, trying to patch up communication links. Apparently, the manual exchange in town was still up, owing to the shifted telephonists working through the night, but the Civic Centre was on the Cooke Point grid so they were cut off until the storm abated. A generator has powered two floodlights in the council building all night but the power grid is expected to be out for days.

Evacuee numbers peaked at 160 during the night, mostly previous residents of the town’s three caravan parks. The evacuation centre is currently manned by 33 SES volunteers, a few of whom are also town councillors, as well as the two policemen last seen patrolling the streets with sirens and loudspeaker. The evacuees were moved to the ground floor several hours earlier when the roof began to peel back with a metallic *screee*, ghastly fingers down a great blackboard.

A group of people perch on top of sleeping bags, mostly barefoot and some still dressed in their nightclothes. They seem calm enough, talking quietly or playing cards. The kids have already made it away to safety and daylight is almost upon them; it could be a lot worse. Tomorrow, hopefully, they can get on with the job of cleaning up. But here and now, there’s not a lot they can do about any of it but wait out the storm.

Claire Bennett is amongst the evacuees and, as a recently registered nurse, she has found herself on call as a medical professional of sorts. Claire is backpacking through the Pilbara on her way to the Top End with her longtime buddy Elaine, having completed her registration in

Britain late last year. The two sojourners had been staying at the Cooke Point caravan park for the night when the Red Alert was declared. By 6pm, caravans were being buffetted and rocked against their tie-downs and water pouring through the park was already causing a washaway. At first sight of the flashing lights of the SES four-wheel-drives, Elaine had cried *Sod this, I'm outta here* and grabbed her backpack before bolting out of there. Claire didn't exactly hesitate, either, almost beating her across the tarmac, despite the howling wind and teeming rain. Now they find themselves in high demand on this longest of nights. Elaine has been trained as a primary school teacher and found herself in charge of the kids, tagging along with them in the first evacuation run to the airport. Claire has been kept busy tending cyclone-related injuries, which have been, thankfully and miraculously, minor. Until now.

The entrance doors *whoosh* inwards and an SES volunteer in Fluoro vest and steel-capped boots leans on it to hold it open for the battered-looking man who follows, carrying a limp form close to his chest. He shoos the nearest woman off a camp mattress and lays her gently down. A solid dark-haired man and a petite lady follow. Claire is on her feet and over there before the SES worker, who she knows is called Pete and is the evacuation centre coordinator, has chance to call her.

'This is Gerald, and his daughter Jodie, who received a head injury about an hour and a half ago, when a piece of furniture fell on her.' Claire smiles reassuringly at the girl's father, noting his filthy appearance and injuries, hopefully superficial. *Either that or he's running on pure adrenalin, poor man.* He barely acknowledges her but is checking his daughter's pulse with one hand, his other clasped around her fingers. 'Gerald, this is Claire—she's a registered nurse and the best we have until we get your daughter to the hospital. We're on that right now.' Peter turns back to Claire. 'They couldn't get out in the cyclone until now and she hasn't regained consciousness since. Gerald has Senior First Aid training, so I need you to take a minute to review her condition with him while I sort out the fastest way of getting her to the hospital.'

Another volunteer swathes the girl with a metallic emergency blanket while Claire quickly checks her over, listening carefully as her father lists her symptoms. Occasionally, his words spill out too fast and trip over one another, but overall, he seems remarkably calm. She nods, asking a few questions to keep his train of thought going. Claire checks the girl's faint pulse and temperature, gently examines the back of her head. She notes the white crusted substance rimming her eyes and coating the inside of her ears, her darkened eye sockets. She

concurs that there is good reason to worry, but doesn't say too much to the girl's parents just yet. Instead, she reassures Gerald that he has done all he could, gestures the girl's mother over to take her place next to her daughter. She hurries over to Pete, who is huddled with four other civil defence workers around a two-way. She doesn't hesitate to interrupt.

'Pete, this little girl has severe trauma to the head and her vitals are weak. I think she needs emergency surgery. We have to get her to the hospital, now!'

Pete nods, passes the mouthpiece back to a man she knows is a councillor. His angular face looks grey. 'Yep, we're getting her a ride in Chris Cottier's dual cab right now now. 'Problem is, the hospital's been mostly flattened. Surgery, casualty and the children's ward, all gone. They've lost backup power and can't carry out operations.'

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Matters moved quickly after that. Half destroyed hospital or not, medical staff are still in attendance there and it remained the best chance they had. The girl's parents are clearly exhausted and are told only that the Port Hedland District Hospital has suffered some damage in the cyclone and is operating under emergency conditions. A minor emergency has already been declared here tonight when the Civic Centre roof began to lift in the early hours of the morning. Based upon the best inspection possible under such conditions, the upper part of the building was declared vulnerable to wind breach. Gusts were estimated in excess of 200kph, more than capable of stripping the remaining roof away in its entirety. If that happened, the walls were likely to fold inwards in a devastating chain reaction. As a precaution, it was decided to move the evacuees to the airport building. This was located about fourteen kilometres inland up the Great Northern Highway, and considered a safer haven than their currently precarious coastal position.

Chris Cottier coordinated this, the second evacuation of the night. The president of the Port Hedland shire council was also a volunteer with the SES and the owner of a local earthmoving business. He contributed his two Bedford 4WD dual cab trucks, which were the only vehicles available that night with the weight, stability and high walled tyres capable of negotiating the storm and surrounding floodways.[9] By the time Phil's Landcruiser completed its

[9] The evacuation of the Civic Centre that night is documented on the front page of The *West* Australian, *Tuesday December 9, 1975*, which states that 'Forty six adults and 12 children who were sheltering in the Port Hedland Civic Centre during the passage of the cyclone had to be evacuated to the airport building when the roof of the centre

emergency dash, each truck had made the journey to the airport twice, their twin-cabs loaded with cyclone refugees. A total of forty-six adults and twelve children had been safely transferred to the airport building.

With the arrival of the critically injured little girl, these resources are swiftly redirected. Staff manning the power stations at Redbank and Anderson Street dug in with diesel back up engines and have kept the distribution systems operating, but the town was lost before midnight when the above-ground power lines were torn down, pulling it off the grid. Now the hospital has reported that its emergency backup systems have also failed, due to water ingress.

All available generators and jerry cans of fuel are secured in the back of the tip, lashed down and covered with heavy-duty tarps. The truck's dual-cab is emptied of would-be evacuees and reloaded with most of the first-aid supplies. Jodie's parents and Claire are in the back. Their driver is an SES volunteer named Eric who contracts to Chris Cottier and is a heavy vehicle mechanic. Another SES man named Scott rides shotgun to man the two-way and navigate. He is an electrician who might come in handy at the hospital. When all is ready, Jodie is carefully passed up into the back seat of the cab by many willing hands and carefully belted in place. Less than twenty minutes after their frantic arrival, and on a night when travelling the streets is precarious at best, Jodie and her parents are moving again.

Phil has already arranged a lift back in an SES 4WD, in preference to chancing it alone in the battered cruiser with no wipers. Pete would have preferred him to wait out the rest of the storm where he was, but when he learnt that the man's young wife, as well as three kids, were holed up alone close by with a window breach in the house, he relented. He could see that Phil was going anyway, so he decided to give him the best shot at it, probably against his better judgment. The vehicle had a two-way on board and the driver was instructed to stay on the premises until the wind abated. The blow had lasted over twelve hours and Pete was hoping they were through the worst of it by now.

The neighbours had made their brief farewells in the centre foyer. Phil assured them he was heading home now to keep an eye on his wife and the remaining children, then enfolded Gerald in a firm hug and wished him well, pounding his back with a fist. Gerald stood stiffly while Emily told their neighbour that they would never forget what he had done for them. Phil

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began to lift.' There is no explanation provided as to how this feat was performed under such conditions. Details of the evacuation and Chris Cottier's involvement were explained to me by long-time resident John Van Uden.

hugged her too and said *Boreí na sas páne kalá.* Emily had stood back and looked at him a moment, aching at how tired he looked. Phil's customary dark regrowth seemed to merge with the shadows gouged beneath his eyes, giving his face a bruised appearance. Phil smiled at her and added in English, *May you go well*. Then he had made a shooing motion with his hands *Go go go now, hurry!*

Chapter 10: Haven

Port Hedland was wrecked by Cyclone Joan when it slammed into the town with 215kmh (135mph) winds just after dawn today. About 85 per cent of the town is damaged, hundreds of roofs have been ripped off, and flooding is a major threat. Hurricane-force winds have prevented emergency controllers making any count of human casualties.
Daily News, Monday December 8, 1975 (front page)

A storm surge of at least 2.6 metres was estimated, however this occurred on lowering tides and no coastal inundation occurred. A much higher storm surge would have occurred to the west of Port Hedland closer to the crossing point. Had the storm surge peak coincided with high tide, then the resulting water level would have been several metres above the highest astronomical tide.
Bureau of Meteorology Report, Regional Office Perth: Severe Tropical Cyclone Joan 8 – 9 December 1975 (p. 2, 2009)

6.55am

Claire steals a look down from the Bedford's cab; they are high above the chaos out there, but she knows this to be an illusion. The weight of the storm has suspended the dawn for over an hour, but now shades of grey and red intrude upon the darkness, revealing images that evoked fascination and horror in equal parts. Almost all of the trees have been stripped bare or uprooted altogether, the survivors bending in skeletal compliance to the continuing pounding winds. Claire has only been in town for two days, lately as a prisoner-of-war of the cyclone. She is unfamiliar with the road ahead, although at one point their co-pilot, Scott, turned and told them they were detouring inland along Anderson Street to get away from the coast for as long as possible. The road out there is all but unrecognizable, strewn about as it is with all manner of debris. Their journey is bumpy and haphazard as the big truck mows over the rubble and wreckage of this town. Black water churns through it all, varying from a trickle to a strange new river over two feet deep.

Every so often, Eric the driver has to detour off the road altogether to get past a particularly large or troubling obstruction. At one point, a live power cable dangled snake-like from its ruined power pole. Scott commented over his shoulder that the thick-walled rubber tyres would insulate them if they ran over it, but Claire shuddered just a little when he added *I don't*

fancy our chances if the sparky end connects with the metal cab. Each time they deviate a new road is forced open; across someone's front yard, or council verge, or straight through a fence. Through windows smeared by the driving rain, Claire makes out recognizable bits of people's lives flung about and discarded; a child's bike, a lounge suite, a wardrobe, a fully intact garden shed. Ethereal scenes materialize before them, fading back into the grey as they pass by. She has to tear her eyes away eventually—it is too overwhelming. Too many houses with their roofs ripped clean off, dead black eyes where the windows had blown out. A service station with just the frame of its roof left, the last of its metal sheeting tearing wildly at a single remaining anchor point. Instead, Claire focuses upon this one little girl, the most important little girl in this world. *Never, ever, as long as I live, will I forget this. Any of it.*

The cab is constantly buffetted by wind gusts, which now seem to be coming in shorter bursts, instead of the sustained gales she felt during the night. Claire wonders just how strong the wind still is out there. Back at the relative safety of the Civic Centre, SES coordinator Pete had told her, almost conversationally, that Joan was a Category Five at landfall about an hour ago and *they don't get much more powerful than that.* Every so often, unknown missiles bounce off the truck with an unnerving *crack.* The occasional frontal assaults on the windscreen are the worst. The men up front swear and duck down when this happens, but the glass is reinforced and is, so far, holding up. The devastation outside has the effect of shrinking their tank-like transport and Claire wonders how much longer it can keep them safe. The thought of attempting any trip out there in anything smaller is inconceivable.

Claire glances across at the girl's parents, their faces etched with worry and exhaustion in the grey light. She is twenty-two years old and Motherhood is the last thing on her mind, although two of her friends from school already had babies. She had tried to keep in touch with them, but it was as though a plank had been removed from the foundation of these friendships. Claire would listen as they reassured her about how happy they were, had never been happier and little Simon/Lisa had changed their lives forever. To Claire, it had seemed as though they were trying too hard, as if they were *pretending.* She looks across at the pale face of this little girl in her mother's lap, then up at her exhausted parents. Now she is not so sure.

Claire reaches under the metallic blanket and gently feels the small feet touching her legs. The girl's skin feels dry and papery to her touch and perhaps a little warmer than before. It is getting increasingly warm and stuffy inside the cab, despite the fan vents set wide open. The

diesel engine chugs and rumbles beneath them, but she barely notices. She convinces herself to take comfort in the truck's sheer size and power, only to find herself mentally cursing the agonizingly slow progress they seem to be making. When it gets particularly rough, the three of them in the back hold the girl up, cushioning her as best they can from the motion. Worry about the condition of her small charge has been gnawing at Claire since she arrived. She cannot even comprehend the hell her parents must be going through. She passes a water bottle across to the little girl's mother, assumes the cheerful tone she saves for her patients.

'Hang in there, Mrs Cadogan, it can't be too much longer. Here, tip a little more of this onto that flannel and keep on gently sponging Jodie—we don't want her getting too warm and we better not crank down a window just yet!' She forces what she hopes is a reassuring smile then glances up at the father. He doesn't seem to notice her. His eyes have taken on a glazed appearance and she hopes he is not going into shock. Claire touches his arm lightly, noticing again the congealed blood there. As soon as the little girl was sorted out, the medical staff at the hospital needed to take a look at the parents.

'Hey, Mr Cadogan, are you alright?' he makes no response at first, until she gently peels away the blanket covering the girl. The movement seems to rouse him and his eyes refocus.

'How about you give me a hand to get this blanket out from around her. I don't think it's too much further, but we don't want her getting any warmer than she is.' The girl's Dad grunts in agreement and they ease away the covering. Underneath, the girl looks smaller and paler than ever. His fingers move to the pulse at her neck almost automatically.

'How's she doing?' Claire wants to get him talking, make sure he is still functioning. He nods, shrugs. *No change.*

'That's something, then. We're almost there, I'm sure.' They lapse back into silence.

'Thank you for your help.' The words are formal and unexpected. Encouraged by his response, she looks up at him, but his eyes are black and reflect no light. They ride in silence for a while and Claire wishes the radio was still working. At one point Scott tries the two-way, but they are out of range or blocked by the storm and he can't make out anything in all the static.

'We're here—get ready!' Eric the driver turns, places his arm across the passenger seat. He looks exhausted like the rest of them and Claire realizes how young he is, maybe only mid-to-late twenties.

'Holy shit!' Scott gets a first look at the remodelling carried out by Joan to the Port Hedland District Hospital. They had been advised of 'extensive damage' over the two-way back at the Civic Centre but no description could prepare them for the reality of it. The newer brick section of the hospital housing the children's wards is completely flattened, reduced to a mess of rubble and twisted metal. Claire is abruptly reminded of her Grandad's grainy old photographs of bombed-out London during the Blitz. Eric backs up, then eases them forward, staying as close to the perimeter of the building as the storm debris would allow. He works the truck around to casualty and is able to stop in a relatively clear spot that used to be the car park. Here, only the walls are still standing. The entire roof area has been stripped down to shredded remnants of tin and haphazard beams. It looked to Claire as if something large and airborne had crashed down onto it from above. There is still no sign of people and they waste no time admiring the scenery.

'Keep going around the outside—they've moved the patients to the older part of the hospital at the back, so there has to be an entrance somewhere.' Scott yells instructions at the driver while fiddling with the two-way. Eric puts her back in gear and the truck rumbles off, following the walls as best he can. He makes a wide detour around a strewn pile of council skip bins, which once occupied the hospital's waste disposal area. They find themselves with the hospital on one side and a high brick wall on the other. The way ahead is relatively clear, but it leaves a space barely wide enough to get the Bedford through. Claire fears they will be forced to back up and retrace their route. Scott manages to make radio contact and a disconnected voice is discernible amongst the static and squabble. *You took your time mate/give us your bearings.* He shouts directions to Eric as they narrowly make it to the end of the alleyway. The driver hesitates, then edges the truck up what might be a slight embankment or a pile of rubbish blocking their way. The engine roars and Emily says *Oh heck* and it seems as if they must tip over. Eric shunts into a lower gear, then another, continues easing her forward, fighting the wheel. The Bedford levels off as Claire realizes she has been holding her breath and the blood pounding in her ears is louder than the engine. She exhales in a rush as Scott yells *Fuck look out!* Eric drives blind, crashes through an asbestos fence in order to maintain their perimeter course, and there is a wall to their left once again. This time the building is grey fibro cement, stained rust red and set with uniform screened windows. *The old part of the hospital.*

The wall ends and Eric eases the Bedford around the corner. They all crane their heads, searching for lights and signs of life, of help. The wind drops away abruptly behind the lee side

of the building and now they can make out double doors, light and people already milling about inside, waiting for them.

Chapter Eleven: Daylight

The chairman of the Port Hedland Port Authority, Mr Jack Haynes, warned before the start of last cyclone season what could happen if all the elements were fused during a cyclone. Because of the awareness, Port Hedland probably could not have been better prepared for a cyclone…yet Joan has caused havoc there.
Daily News, Monday, December 8, 1975

7.14am
Port Hedland District Hospital

'Well, with such a ferocious cyclone on the way, we decided to stay on as emergency staff for the night—there was no way of knowing the level of casualties we'd be dealing with. Of course, we sent home as many patients as we could, but there were still close on eighty people left by four o'clock last night. None in a critical condition, thankfully.' Ruth Miller is a nursing sister in her late twenties, stationed to the newly transient children's ward. She is tired and cheerful and her words tumble out like babbling water. Sister Miller is wearing disposable thin white gloves and is cleaning up Gerald's arm, bathing away the crusted blood with cotton wool soaked in saline water from little plastic blister tubes. She is trying to be gentle, but his arm is ingrained with mud, blood and oil and is taking a bit of work just so she can see what's going on. The gash on her patient's forearm looks red and angry and is seeping blood again. Her patient gives no indication that he is in pain; in fact, he doesn't seem to notice her at all. It looks as if he'll need sutures and maybe a tetanus shot.

'Can you remember what caused this injury, Mr Cadogan?' Gerald shakes his head, not seeming to care. Mumbles about being hit by something flying about out there. Ruth notes the torn edges of the wound and concurs that it may well have been caused by a metal object.

'Have you had a tetanus shot recently?' Gerald doesn't care about that, either. From the look of him, Ruth could amputate the limb from the elbow down with a hacksaw on the spot and he wouldn't even notice. Not that she can blame him, poor man. She decides she will try and get a doctor to have a look at it, but if they are too busy then she'll go ahead and treat him anyway. Regional hospitals are thankfully different from the big hospitals in Perth where, in Ruth's opinion, *perfectly capable nurses aren't allowed to do stuff all*. She continues on with her

account of the night's events, in spite of her unresponsive audience, for she finds that it is one way to get her head around it all.

'Anyway, by the early hours of the morning we'd all been on duty for over fourteen hours, so we decided to take it in turns to have a bit of a lie-down before we starting keeling over. I'd only just gotten my head down and was looking up at the ceiling, when it seemed like it was *moving.* I didn't believe it at first, thought I'd just gone a bit dizzy. But it didn't stop, it was shifting! I sat up and called Matron Fricker over and she certainly didn't like the look of it, either.' Ruth notices that the young Pommie nurse who arrived with her patient appears to be listening and is encouraged.

'So we decided to evacuate, initially as a bit of a precaution. There were twelve children there that we just grabbed and threw into two cots and we bundled out the two adult patients as well. So there's the patients, two doctors and eleven nurses and aides, including me, tearing out of there. It was a bit of a snap decision but the wind was so loud and the building was creaking so we had to do *something*!'

Ruth places a large cotton pad over Gerald's wound and has her patient hold it in place. She starts bathing the smaller cuts on the back of his hand. 'Then, as we're dashing out of that part of the hospital, the roof starts to lift and the walls are caving in around us! There's a loud *crack* and the whole roof goes. Great big chunks of rubble and bricks are raining down where the patients' beds were only *minutes* before. Talk about a lucky escape.'[10]

They are in the corridor of what was formerly orthopedics but is now a makeshift ward. Hospital beds line the walls, making it necessary to turn sideways to get past in a few places. With casualty, emergency and the entire children's ward now reduced to rubble, the remaining eighty-odd patients have been spread out into any available space. Erratic light puddles onto the streaky patterned lino floors, imbuing patients and staff alike with an unhealthy pallor. The walls are mission brown and the ceiling dirty white and Claire feels suddenly quite flat, needing to see bright colours again. She sits next to Jodie's mother, who lies half dozing in a recliner chair found for her. Emily has been offered a sedative but refused it, determined to wait for news of her daughter. Claire decides she is either in mild shock or exhausted and likely, a combination of both.

[10] Matron M. Fricker's account of the dramatic evacuation of the destroyed section of the hospital was detailed on the front page of *The Daily News*, Tuesday, 9 December, 1975 (City Ed.).

Claire gets up and stretches, feels the little bones in her spine cracking and popping. She makes her way down the corridor, stopping to reassure or straighten the covers of some of the bedridden patients she passes. She reaches the window, peers beyond the smeared glass. Dawn is happening out there, suspended beneath dark clouds and sleeting rain, but she's not really looking. She trawls about in her head for light, for happy thoughts. Flicks back to an earlier time, excitedly planning the Trip of a Lifetime with her best buddy Elaine. Both in their early twenties, they fled babies sired by hard-drinking husbands they exist alongside with in tiny terraced houses. Take a year off to chase the sun, have anonymous sex with bronzed men, drink too much and party hard before settling down, or not…maybe in Australia, for they love the climate and there is plenty of work for both of them. Now Claire wonders where they have fled to, but also knows that she is exactly where she is supposed to be, right here and right now.

Her mind switches gears again without conscious decision and she is deep in thought about the unconscious little girl. Gerald and Emily have been so strong. Maybe all parents would be under such circumstances, she didn't know. They had been focused and animated upon arrival at the hospital, answering questions from medical staff about the circumstances of their daughter's accident and her symptoms. Close attention is given to the details of her seizure. *It happened about two hours ago by now, maybe a bit longer. Lasted about five minutes. No, she doesn't have any allergies. Hardly been sick a day in her life, apart from measles and chicken pox. Now this.* The medical staff scrambled to get Jodie into x-ray, even as her parents completed their account. Fortunately, the tiny radiology theatre is located in the old part of the hospital and has survived the night. It will now have to double as a surgery. In this endless night, a little girl is running out of time.

Under normal circumstances there would have been the opportunity for the parents to go with her into x-ray, to wear the oversized blue lead-lined aprons and hold her hand, then stay with her again before the operation while the anesthesia took effect. Claire had also offered to go in with Jodie, to stay with her and assist—whatever the outcome—but Dr Waters hesitated. He was compact and stocky with a calm air of assurance at odds with the chaos swirling around him.

'Does she know you?'

Claire had shaken her head. *No, she hasn't regained consciousness.*

'Then better you wait out here and do what you can for the parents. There's enough of us

to cope with this. Apart from the hospital damn near blowing down around our ears, we've had mercifully little to do so far on the medical front. Considering the night we've had, that's nothing short of a bloody miracle. Let's just keep our fingers crossed we haven't run out of luck.'

Luck. Claire has pondered on this elusive commodity, concluding that the presence of Dr Jeremy Waters is probably the luckiest thing that has happened to Jodie so far. Dr Waters is a pediatric surgeon and the best chance the little girl has left. Claire had already spoken to Ruth about the doctors in attendance at what remains of the Port Hedland District Hospital. Two are GP's, which is usual in terms of regional hospital staffing. Permanent specialists are almost unheard of in country hospitals, who are instead periodically contracted out on short regional tours. If a required specialist is not available in rural areas when needed, unfortunate patients either go on a waiting list, or, if their condition is serious, have to be flown to Perth for treatment. Dr Waters had been at the end of his current regional tenure and was due to fly out at 9.10am this morning. Until Joan kept him here.

Claire tugs her fingers absent-mindedly through her unruly dark blonde hair, grimacing at the insurmountable tangles encountered. Her personal appearance is the last of her concerns. Her thoughts instead return to the emergency crews back at the council chambers, mobilized all night and ready to assist people needing help in the storm. The problem was, there was no way for the stricken to call for help, and, if even if there was, it was all but impossible to get to them until Joan released her furious grip on the town. Claire had tried not to worry about how many of the townspeople were still out there, maybe buried or injured or dying and needing urgent help. There had been little to do at the Civic Centre encampment once the early evacuees were settled, their minor wounds treated. Sleep seemed out of the question, with the storm out there trying to peel off the roof like a giant can-opener, so Claire had sat with Pete and some of the volunteers and talked with them about their town. She learnt of the scattered nature of the place and the different challenges each area might face that night from cyclone threat; the battered Cooke Point district set right on the coast, the wharf and town centre vulnerable to tidal inundation, the inland but isolated South Hedland district and beyond that, the ill-prepared Aboriginal families at the Three-Mile and Twelve-Mile reserves.

After Elaine had left with the kids, Claire fished her torch and her well-thumbed *Caltex Road Map of Western Australia* out of her backpack and unfolded it on the carpet. There were

little cutaway squares of the Kimberly, the Pilbara and the North West Region floating about off the coast. She had traced their route so far by torchlight, jumping to the Pilbara cutout then studying the detail of *Port Hedland.* She had thought about this sprawling town of twelve thousand people, most of it clinging to a thin stretch of coast surrounded by vast ocean on one side and the five-fingered tidal creeks on the other, rendering it virtually an island. An especially vulnerable one, when the big blows came.

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'Mr and Mrs Cadogan, your daughter Jodie has a subdural hematoma. She suffered a direct blow to the head during the cyclone—'

'A chest of drawers fell on her.' Gerald interrupts, his hands going up to the back of his head in a gesture thankfully absent this night up to this point. 'I should know, I was there. A bloody heavy chest of drawers.' A diagnosis will confirm all of his fears and he feels the anger boiling up. *This boy could be young enough to be my son and he's trying to tell me what happened? I'll facking tell him what happened!*

Emily is wide awake now. She sits up and forcefully shushes her husband. *Enough, Gerald. We need to know this.* She gestures for the doctor to continue. Gerald slowly lowers his hands, takes a breath.

'A direct blow to the head can cause bruising to the brain and damage to the internal tissues, due to something called a coup-contrecoup.' He pronounces it *coo-countercoo*. 'A bruise at the site of the impact is called a coup lesion. Then, as the brain is jolted backwards by the impact, it can hit the skull on the other side of the head and cause another bruise called a countercoup lesion.'

'I'm not looking for a science lesson here. I just want to know what's wrong with my daughter!' Gerald has little patience, little of anything, left. Ruth looks at Claire, nods slightly. *Sedative.*

'Gerald, *please!* Let the doctor finish or go and wait somewhere else!' Emily's voice is edged with metal, a tone he has never heard before. It is enough to drag him back.

Dr Parker is a local GP based at the hospital and has been assigned the task of updating and assisting the waiting parents. He is obligated to inform them of the basics of their child's condition and remedial action taken, but now there is little time. He is keen to get back in there

and assist if necessary. 'This jarring of the brain back-and-forth can cause tearing to the surrounding lining, tissues and blood vessels. Jodie's x-rays confirm that a subdural hematoma has resulted, where a blood clot forms beneath the skull and beneath the covering surrounding the brain, but *outside* of the brain.' He makes a fist for a brain as he speaks, cups his other hand around it to demonstrate.

'So…that's a good thing then, if it's not actually on her brain?' Emily dares to be hopeful.

'Well, the blood clot is quite large and is causing her brain to swell. That's why she had the bruising around her eyes…'

'And the clear fluid from her eyes, her ears…?' Gerald recalls the symptoms but has forgotten that Emily is there.

The doctor nods encouragingly, pleased that this man has apparently gotten himself in order. 'Probably from a small tear in the dura matter—the covering of her brain.'

'*Brain fluid?* God Almighty, she was *leaking* brain fluid?' The little girl's mother has gone quite pale. 'I thought she was *crying*…' She looks like she is going to be sick, so Claire scrambles to grab an empty rubbish bag off the nearest patient's bed. Emily clasps it gratefully.

The doctor nodded. 'That may well have been a good thing, as it could have relieved some of the pressure.' He pauses for a moment, choosing his words. 'Jodie has a closed, or non-penetrating injury, meaning her brain was not exposed. But since the brain is covered by the skull, there is only a small amount of room for it to swell before brain damage can happen. The pressure inside Jodie's skull is too high because her brain is running out of room to swell up and is getting deprived of a sufficient oxygen supply. Now we have to relieve that pressure, urgently. Dr Waters is getting ready to operate on her right now.'

'What sort of operation?' Gerald's voice is flat.

'Decompressive craniectomy is a fairly routine procedure, used to control high intracranial pressure.' The doctor is brisk, business-like.

'He's going to drill a hole in her head.' Emily's voice is flat and uncompromising. Claire is not sure if the little girl's mother still needs to vomit or may simply pass out. She was, at least, sitting down.

'A small piece of Jodie's skull, known as a bone flap, will need to be removed in order to expand the dura matter surrounding her brain and reduce the pressure being exerted. This is a

temporary procedure and the bone flap may be grafted back in place, once we have her medically stabilized.' The doctor leans forward, his tone softening. 'I know it sounds rather awful, Mr and Mrs Cadogan, but this is actually a fairly common surgical procedure for injuries of this nature. We are very lucky to have Dr Waters with us, who is a pediatric surgeon with specialist experience in this area. Your daughter is in the best possible hands.'

Sister Ruth Miller has been looking on and now she exchanges a glance with Claire, one eyebrow raised. Claire nods slightly, understanding, for she holds the same concerns. Concerns about whether Dr Waters' *best possible hands* were sufficient to counteract the lack of full power and lighting, or a fully-stocked and operational operating ward, together with the mother of all cyclones blowing outside, still trying to get in. She says nothing, but goes off to fetch Mrs Cadogan a drink from the water cooler that is no longer cool.

'Don't I have to sign something? For the operation…don't they need parental consent?' Gerald's concerns skitter off in another direction.

'Don't worry, Mr Cadogan—you managed to get her here, so we can take that to imply your consent in an emergency situation.' Dr Parker excuses himself, promising to return with news of Jodie's condition once the operation has been carried out.

Claire goes to the big surgical chair pushed back against the wall and slumps down into the firm cool vinyl. She closes her eyes, just for a moment. They burn hot and dry beneath her lids, aching in their sockets. The resultant darkness is peppered with little pinpricks of light and shaded in red and purple. She wonders at the woeful lack of empathy demonstrated by doctors when called upon to deal with distressed family members. She concluded some time ago that these attributes are no doubt covered as part of a medical degree, given their universal application. Young Dr Parker has given her no reason to revise her thinking.

Claire hears a hesitant cough close by and drags open her eyes to a mud-encrusted pair of work boots. She casts her line of sight upwards and keeps going, for the man standing before her seems ridiculously tall. He wears dark overalls and a safety vest. The Fluoro stripes gleam dully, giving him an otherworldly appearance, but that could just be the workings of her foggy brain. She swallows a massive yawn and makes to shuffle to her feet, but a big hand on her shoulder urges her to remain seated. He drops to a crouching position in front of her, yet she still has to look up to meet his eyes.

'You look knackered.' She struggles to place the gravelly voice and fails, so instead sits there blinking at him vacantly. A hand is stuck out in her direction.

'Eric Mills. Dump truck driver. How's the little girl going?'

'Ahhh! Right.' Claire shakes the proffered hand politely and it hides hers completely. She tries to recollect her muzzy thoughts, realizing she must have dozed off for a minute or two.

'I'd come back later but the wind seems to be dropping a bit, so we're heading over to Anderson Street to see if we can help with any patch-work on the power distribution to the hospital. Seems to be the most important thing she needs right now.' He's taken his helmet off and his face is filthy. The whites of his eyes gleam against the dark contours of his face, his irises entirely black in the dull lighting. Claire forces herself to full consciousness but, unfairly, has all the symptoms of a major hangover. She finds herself wondering what colour his eyes really are.

'Jodie has a traumatic brain injury and they've had to operate to reduce the swelling. Radiology's been converted to an emergency theatre. Obviously appalling conditions, but our kid's lucked out for the first time since this happened with a pediatric surgeon on site. We're waiting to find out how it's going.' She's not even consciously forming the words and is glad her Nurse Voice has kicked in. It tends to do that no matter how tired she feels—no doubt a side effect of the many unsociable hours already put into this *crazy thankless rewarding* profession.

Eric nods, frowning. 'Thanks for summing up. Had enough to think about already. I sure hope she makes it.' He unfolds to upright and Claire stumbles to her feet after him.

'So do us all. Good job, you, by the way. Regular Steve McQueen stuff.' Eric cracks a grin at this and his teeth are white. Claire mentally confirms her earlier thought, that he is quite young. Perhaps only a few years older than she.

'Yeah, that's me, alright. I'll check back in as soon as I can. Thanks, mate.' He pats her shoulder and lopes off. Claire watches his departing form and is glad that, while he is tall, he is in proportion and not a beanpole. She finds herself enjoying watching him leave. Perhaps a bit too much, under the circumstances, so she slumps back in her chair, blowing a loose bit of hair out of her eyes. *Mate. May-te. MAAY-teh.* She practises the local word a few times, liking its casual, comforting sound. She's never been called that by a bloke before.

The floodlight in the corridor *plinks* out, leaving only the muted glow of the kero lamps set up at either end of the passage and the murky light seeping in through the single screened window at the end of the passage. Gerald is on his feet, already rattled.

‘It’s okay, Mr Cadogan.’ Sister Miller is there, reassuring. She eases him back to a sitting position. ‘The doctor did say they would need all the power they can get in there, so they’ve diverted all of the generators. The operation must be underway as we speak.’

Outside, past the smeary windows, the wind starts to shift. For the first time in fifteen hours, it eases in intensity.

PART THREE: JACKIE

Chapter Twelve: Aftermath

'We have not found any people dead or injured yet, because we have not been able to do a proper reconnaissance,' said Emergency Service Controller, Mr Dick Langley.
Daily News (Final), Front page, Monday December 8, 1975

1.05pm Monday December 8, 1975
Cross Family residence: Mosely Street, Port Hedland

'What now, Mum?' Jackie Cross, best friend of Jodie Cadogan, chirpily fronts up once more to her mother for instructions. Mum has a mop and bucket going in the laundry, sopping up muddy water from the floor and tipping it down the sink. The water is less than an inch thick but she's been at it for ages and doesn't seem to be making much progress. Her macramé doormat has drowned in the mess and lies soggy and discarded on top of the washing machine. The back door bangs on its hinges in the dying wind outside, revealing a sullen grey sky and a back yard now strewn with rubbish and bereft of its garden shed and rear fence. There was never much grass out there, but now it's hidden under a layer of sand and red muddy water. The clothes hoist is bent back at right angles and creaks mournfully as its broken back tries to rotate. Lorraine Cross doesn't appear to hear her daughter at all; she's staring outside for the umpteenth time in the past ten minutes, trying to get her head around it all.

'Mum?' Jackie is politely insistent. She is happy to help but there is only so much a kid can do cooped up inside, at least until Dad gets back and the power is back on. She also needs to check on her friends, to see how they got on during the blow last night and to swap cyclone stories. Jackie has been locked up in the house with her mother and little brother for over twenty two hours now and it feels like *days and days*.

'D'ya think we'll have to go back to school this year?' Jackie's little brother Nathan is in the hallway and his voice echoes from down the passage. Clearly, he has his priorities right. Nathan has found a small rubber ball, the *really bouncy* kind, and is practising skimming it across the puddles in the hallway. It skips at the end of the corridor and bounces off his parents' bedroom door with a saturated *thud-whumph.* The noise reverberates down the passage and

bounces straight of the frontal lobe off his mother's brain. She makes that irritated clicking noise with her tongue, discards her mop and sloshes past Jackie into the kitchen. She hollers at her son, the noise resonating down the hallway at a volume many times louder than his ball.

Nathan! I've told you not ter' bounce that bloody thing int' house! Look 'et mess yer meckin' of me door!' Nathan pauses, his eyes flicking from the small wet circles on the ruined door to the dark sheets of damp extending all the way up the walls. The fibreboard doors in the passage have all swollen up past the half way point and you can't get them open anymore without using your shoulder. He looks over at his sister, exchanges a *she's lost it* look with her then puts the ball behind his back, assuming a wounded expression.

'Well, what *can* I do, then? Yer keep tellen' us to keep out of the way but there's nowhere to *keep*! I can't even get back into my room without breaking down the door.'

'Can I go and check on Jodie?' They've been waiting for the All Clear to be called since breakfast, but so far the wind has persisted and there's stuff all over the shop out there. Jackie figures she may as well give it another go, seeing as she's going to get yelled at whatever she says.

Her mother turns on her, bristling. 'Have yer fed 'cat?'

'I can't *find* the cat. He'll come back when he's ready. He always does.' Jackie rather hopes he wouldn't but that cat has over a hundred lives instead of the usual nine. She absent-mindedly runs her thumb over a white raised scar on her forearm. Five stitches. Happened the *last* time she tried to get Dollymix the cat in when he wasn't ready.

'What about 'washing up?' At least they still had running water, although for how long was unknown with the power out.

'Done, but a bit streaky 'cos there's no hot water.'

'Checked your rooms over?'

'All good, can't see much damage. Except you can't see out of the windows and the doors are all swollen up. And our bedroom wall's got a big dark patch up near the ceiling.' Her mother visibly tensed at that but let it go without comment.

'How's sweeping out 'front going?' Jackie blew out a big sigh at that one. Now she *knew* her mother was just not thinking straight.

'Sweeping?! Mum, have you *seen* it out there? Dad said we're going to need a front-end loader to move that lot. Besides, he's taken the wheelbarrow and all the spades with him.' Ernie

Cross had jumped on the radio as soon as it was back on air at just after ten o'clock that morning. Among the scramble of cyclone status reports and near-miss stories and assistance updates from Perth and Darwin, ABC North West Radio was also running backyard bulletins. Every available tradesman in town had been mobilized to the control centre set up in the council chambers. Within minutes, Ernie was out the front with his oldest son Dennis, clearing sand and debris out of the way in order to get the Landrover moving. His wife Lorraine would have preferred he stayed home a little longer. The wind gusts were occasionally still really strong and the All Clear looked like being hours away. Jackie's Dad was not to be swayed.

'What for, love? You heard them ont' wireless—they want all tradesmen to report *now*. Besides, Joan's swung away inland. Winds are down to below eighty 'kays and dropping and 'pressure's back up. We're over the worst of it, and we're doin' alright, here. There's lots more poor buggers 'round town worse off than us what need a bit of help, so I'm off.' Ernie had dropped a kiss on her cheek, said *Chin up, love.* Her oldest son had waved and grunted what passed as a farewell. Dennis, at fourteen-and-a-half and already a strapping lad these days, had also been impatient to go along and help. That, and get away from the house for a while. Lorraine had watched the stiff wind buffeting the Landrover and called out that it was *Still Bloody windy any road* but knew there was no stopping her husband when he was in a mood like that. So she watched him carefully back *up* the driveway, newly elevated by a layer of sand halfway up the low verge fence, then bump down a considerable incline on the other side that wasn't there yesterday. No sooner had the dust swallowed up her men than Lorraine Cross had reached determinedly for the mop.

Jackie looks around at their house now, decides her Dad is right; they *are* doing okay. A bit of water in the house, sure, but the roof is still on and the walls in place. The day has stretched on forever and it's barely mid-afternoon. Highlights have included breakfast (cereal and *fresh* milk, gulping it down before it goes off and they have to start on that weird-tasting Longlife stuff) and lunch (vegemite and cheese sandwiches made with still-soft white bread from the freezer, with apples and more milk). Mum's been a lot crankier than usual all day, rationing the fridge door opening and yelling a bit too much. She fussed about the freezer a lot, as well; reckons that order of frozen food she got in from Perth will be ruined now—twenty dollars down the drain. Mum's tired.

'So…..is there anything else I can do, or can I go off and see Jodie? Maybe Mrs Cadogan, needs some help. The wind is definitely dropping, after all.' Jackie is reluctant to nag but it's getting a bit much, all of them stuck in the house with nothing to do and on top of each other. It's getting late and she's becoming increasingly worried that they may have to spend the rest of the day, then all of the night, cooped up inside.

'What about waiting for't All Clear? If you're out and about ont' street when you're not supposed to be, you'll find yourself picked up by 'SES or 'police or God only knows who!' Lorraine sets down the mop and lights up a Winnie Blue. She's smoked more than usual today. Jackie decides that Mum is weakening and finds herself wanting to giggle, for this is all getting rather absurd.

'*Mu-um*! I think the emergency services have got better things to do today than bother about a couple of kids out and about! But don't worry, I'll be careful and stay out of the way.'

Lorraine looks at her daughter. According to the radio, winds speeds above 63 km/h are still technically at gale force strength. The wind speed at Port Hedland Airport was measured at 75 km/h a little while ago, but that is quite a bit inland. She thinks back to the screaming wind they had all last night. Now, outside is barely a stiff breeze in comparison. They've been arguing about wind speeds on the radio, with the official recorded maximum of 208 km/h being scoffed at. The phone lines are still out but one bloke, a reporter, managed to ring in with his account on a press priority line. He spent the night with a press junket in the Highway Motel on Sutherland Street and feared for his life as Joan removed the roof, piece-by-piece. *The wind was so strong that the door literally flew off its hinges, and then the window blew out on the other side of the room. It took six of us to get it shut and jam all of the furniture in the room up against it. At first light the wind seemed to change direction and we dared to venture out to the shelter of the walkway. I will never forget the sight of airborne seawater streaming in a clear blue line and flying in over the seafront units to my left.*[11] He put the overnight wind gusts at over 300 km/h but Lorraine thought *that* might be pushing it a bit.

'Mum?' Lorraine jerks out of her reverie and sighs. The kids certainly were bouncing off the walls. And with Ernie still gone and no phone or power, it would be reassuring to have some news from around the neighbourhood. She relents and hopes she won't regret it later.

[11]Adapted from Smith, C. (1998, October 31). *Eyewitness account of Cyclone Joan* [anon].

'Be VERY careful out there! Don't go any further than Jodie's place and, if it looks dangerous, come back home straight away!' Jackie air-punches triumphantly as yet another *thud-whumph* echoes from down the hallway.

'And tek yer brother wi' you and don't forget that bloody bouncy ball!' Jackie would have preferred to leave her darling little brother behind, but she wasn't game to push her luck any further. Besides, Nathan got along okay with Jodie's brother Ian, who was only a year older, so the boys could hang about together and leave them alone while she caught up with her best friend.

'Bewdy, Mum. Come on, squirt, before I change my mind.' Jackie motions to her brother, who is standing hopefully in the doorway. He also does the air-punch thing. *Yesss!*

'And speak 'Queen's bloody English!' Her mother blows out a puff of smoke and taps the end of her ciggie into the ashtray vigorously.

'Yes, Mum,' says Jackie dutifully. Losing their broad Yorkshire accent had been a high priority for the Cross kids upon arrival in the country almost three years ago. It didn't take them long to realise that the local kids enjoyed picking on the way they spoke, calling them Pommie bastards and telling them to Go home. Dennis had gotten into several fights at school about his accent and it wore thin pretty quickly. So he and Jackie spent *hours* practising the local dialect. They would say Mate! *May-tuh. Mayte!* Jackie learned to sound the words out in her head before speaking. *How you going, Mayte? 'Owyergoin', mayte?* It was like learning a new language, but they could do it. They had to.

As for their parents, Ernie didn't mind how his kids spoke, as long as he could mostly understand them. He certainly had enough exposure to the Australian accent in the workplace. Lorraine was horrified at her children running barefoot and speaking like the local rabble, but she soon understood that the only way to stop it was to go Back Home, something Ernie would never agree to. He liked it here, liked the wide open spaces and the fact you could drive *three thousand miles* without falling into the sea. For their part, both Ernie and Lorraine spoke as broadly as the day they stepped off the plane—Lorraine possibly more so.

'And wear closed-in shoes! There's all sorts o'rubbish out there!' Mum mashes out her fag, shoots that one over her shoulder as she heads back into the laundry.

That one brings them both up short. Closed-in shoes. Crikey, did they even *have* any that still fitted? None of them had needed such a thing since arriving in Hedland nearly six months

ago. Sandals, or occasionally, sandshoes or gymboots were worn at school, but that was about it. Nathan is trying to get his bedroom door open but it's wedged shut. Jackie watches as her brother applies his shoulder to the wood but his skinny little body just seems to bounce off. His face is going slightly red with exertion and Jackie finds herself laughing at the sight of him. He tries to look indignant, but the more unhelpful the door is, the funnier it seems to get. Nathan laughs so hard that he kind of slides down the door and ends up sitting in a puddle of water, which sets his sister off again. Mum starts yelling at them from the laundry *What's so bloody funny?* so they shoulder open the door and Nathan almost falls into his room. He grabs his sandals off the floor and Jackie finds an old pair of thongs that had once belonged to Dennis in the wardrobe. She says *Close enough* and they bolt down the hall before their mother changes her mind.

'And don't be too long!' Mum's voice follows them out the front door.

'Bewdy, Mum!' yells Jackie and Nathan says *You'll cop it*.

They follow the Landrover tracks up the remodelled driveway and jump down the other side, the stiff wind fanning their bodies. Everything looks bigger and washed out, as though all of the colours have been drained out of the world. The sky is grey, the trees are bare and everything that is not covered by a layer of dirty sand seems to have been blasted red-brown. It starts to rain and Nathan laughs, opening his mouth to catch raindrops. Jackie copies him and finds the water surprisingly cool against the tepid wind. Rain is almost as big a novelty in Hedland as snow would have been.

Jackie realizes with a little rush that school will probably not reopen now until the new school year next February. Next year—Nineteen seventy six. The dread uncertainty of the past twenty-four hours has passed and she feels buoyant and guilty on this strange holiday. Her mood is infectious as she continues up the street with her brother in the peculiar rain. They jump over obstacles and whoop at each other. They run to get rid of what Mum calls *the inside bugs*, caused by being cooped up for too long indoors. The ever-meticulous Mr Sinclair from eight doors up is a lone figure on the street, shovelling sand from his driveway in all the wind. He looks up, calls them *Barking mad.* Nathan goes *Woof woof woof* and Mr Sinclair whistles, lobbing a sand bindi at him. Nathan darts easily to one side and the small missile of wet sand disintegrates against a nearby sheet of tin. The kids reach the end of the Mosely Street loop, skid to the end where it intersects Sutherland Street. They stop and look around, gawking.

'Oh, my…*Gawd*,' murmurs Jackie.

Mosely Street is a block back from the beach and Jackie thought that *their* street had been trashed—until she had a look at the beachfront. It seemed that not one of the houses along here had escaped. All were missing roofs, walls, driveways, fences.

'It's like…..Mars.' Nathan's voice is hushed and all of the exuberance has gone out of him. Jackie wants to bring him out of it, stay cheerful a while longer *Yeah, that'd be right, squirt, I always knew you were a Martian* but now she finds herself agreeing with him. Here, now, today…this looks nothing like the town she knows.

'C'mon Nath, let's just keep going.' She puts an arm around her little brother's shoulders, for he is suddenly smaller.

They shuffle up the street now, keeping an eye on the road. The tarmac beneath their feet is almost completely obscured under a tatter of *stuff* and sand. They have to splash through streams of silty brown water in places, splattering warm muddy rivulets up their shins. Jackie pulls up short at a broken tackle box strewn over the street, *hooks and a rusty knife, fishing line and sinkers tangled up and all over the place. That could really hurt someone. Nasty.* She stoops down and carefully shoves the tangled mess back in, closes up the box as best she can and places it up and out of the way, where the verge should be. Now she understands her mother's concern about their feet.

'Everything's…bigger.' Nathan is still trying to figure it all out. Jackie knows what he means. The bleak sky seems heavy now, pressing down on them. It is almost like being cooped up indoors again. Jackie longs for blue sky, wants to *blink in bright sunshine hot and dry on your skin, wants it so much that it hurts*. There is no foliage to break up the grey, for the trees are almost all gone, either stripped bare, deformed or uprooted altogether.

'Well, we either keep going to the Cadogans' and see how they made out, or we go home to get yelled at a bit more by Mum—your call.' Nathan gives her an eyeball roll and Jackie knows that this is a no-brainer. They start walking again, watching out for emergency crews who might send them home while staying as close to the middle of the road as they can. It is impossible to walk in a straight line as fallen trees, piles of rubble and small lakes of rain and seawater cover most of the road.

Jackie glances down at the beach and that looks wrong as well. The tide should be in by now but the water is so dark it's hard to tell. From her vantage point up on the street, there are no

lighter patches of relief anywhere. She can't tell where the sand ends and the sea begins. She resolves to go down and check it out with Jodie a bit later.

On her left, some of the injured houses stir with signs of life. A middle-aged couple empty out their lives onto the front yard. Lengths of ruined carpet and dirty squares of lino litter a sandy expanse that might once have been grass or maybe garden beds. A sodden three-piece lounge sits on top of the lino, next to a waterlogged bookcase and battered chest of drawers. The man nods *'Afternoon* as they pass but the kids only smile politely and keep their heads down. These people have lost pretty much everything and it seemed just plain rude to stare. The man continues to tug at a misshapen mattress that has wedged in the doorway as they pass by.

The next house down used to be a fine two-storey pole home but overnight, it has been scalped. The tattered remnants of its roof flap grotesquely in the warm wind. The front walls remain, and the external stairway, but the windows are no more than dark holes. The stairway no longer makes it all the way to the ground, for it has been cut off ten foot from the bottom. A twisted mess of metal below is all that is left of it. An occasional gust of wind catches a dangling sheet of tin and it bangs eerily against the side of the house, reminding Jackie of a ghost town from one of the Wild West movies that Dad and her big brother Dennis loved to watch together. A lone tree remains in the front yard, bare branches clawing the sky as the chaos below tries to drag it down. The carport space under the front of the house is empty and there are no people around. Jackie hopes they all got out well beforehand.

A few doors up, an older girl they both recognize from Dennis's bus to Hedland Senior High School sits on her bed in her room, just as Jackie did earlier this morning. Except this girl's room no longer has walls on three sides, or a ceiling. Her wardrobe sits along the back wall, which now extends the full length of what remains of the front of the house. To her right, a chest of drawers is cluttered up on top with candles and Coke cans. A watermarked Leif Garret poster remains on the back wall, next to the bedroom door. The door opens onto a hallway with entire sections missing, providing cutaway glimpses into the desolate back yard beyond. Jackie is reminded of her doll's house back in England, with the detachable front that allows you to reach inside and move things around.

The girl's jeans are rolled up to the knees and her white logo t-shirt is oversized but looks brand new. Her face is freckled and her hair pulled back in a rough ponytail that matches Jackie's. Beneath her muddy thonged feet, the stripy carpet ends where the front wall used to be.

The single-level house is on stilts and, were the girl to stand and take two steps forward, she would fall into a two-foot deep expanse where the front verandah used to be. This moat extends up the front of the house and is piled up with the missing bits of the building. The girl looks up at Nathan and Jackie with interest as they pass but does not get up from the foot of her bed. She seems to be trying to read a book but is really just fiddling with it. She regards them from under a messy fringe, gives them a cheeky grin. The kids stop on the road and give her a bit of a wave.

'Owyergoin?' The girl's standard greeting is not out of place, given the circumstances.

'Oh, you know. This and that. You all okay?' Jackie calls over, the words tumbling out of her mouth.

The girl nods, pushes her hair out of her eyes. 'Yep, we're good. Well, not the house. Obviously. Spent the night in the bathtub under a mattress. Weird day, huh?'

'You're not kidding. What'll you do now?' Jackie is already wondering how many they can fit on the parts of the floor at home still dry.

'Stayin' at the Civic Centre tonight. My Dad's over there now. Then going to stay down in Perth with my aunty, the first flight we can get out on. Maybe even tomorrow. Early holiday. It's not all bad.' She shrugs, looks around the remains of her room and up at the sky.

They agree with her, call out *good luck* and continue on. Jackie can hear her Mum saying, *You can rebuild 'buildings, it's 'people you've ter worry about!* For the first time, she gets it.

It starts to rain again as they reach the Crawford Street loop and turn away from the beach. This time it comes in heavy, but no one bothers to try to take shelter as the rain is warm and everyone and everything is wet anyway.

Up on Crawford Street, it looks pretty rough as well. The kids have to walk at an angle along the verge as the low lie of the road formed a gutter during the storm that became a river and finished up as a dam. The entire street is clogged up with twisted bits of metal and branches and rubbish and will need nothing less than a front-end loader to clear it out. They pass Mr Maher the milkman's place, who lives six doors down from the Cadogans. He tied his shiny new white van to the carport yesterday and had it blasted red for his trouble. All that is left of the carport are the poles on either side of his van. Most of the roof over the house has been peeled off, too, but they can see that he's got a tarp up there already. Perhaps it was Mr Maher or maybe it was someone else, but *Thanks very much Joan* has been scrawled on the side of his

muddy red van. The letters are metal grey and Jackie can see that the paint has been blasted away down to bare metal.

They make it to the Cadogans' duplex and Jackie feels exhausted. Today, the ten-minute walk felt like a hike to Dampier. Or maybe across Mars. They scoot up the driveway and bang on the front door, wondering why everything is still battened down and locked up. There is no answer and no noise from inside, so Jackie goes around the back to investigate. This is easier to do than it usually is, for the fence is gone on all sides. The back door is also locked shut and there is no noise coming from inside at all. They wander back out the front. Jackie feels the weariness inside her turning to a dread sense of unease and then panic as an SEC worker in orange overalls finally answers the door.

Chapter Thirteen: Inundation

Eighty-five per cent of all houses were damaged to some degree. In ocean front areas, all houses were damaged and some unroofed. Beach sand was piled up to a depth of up to two metres. Power and communications were unavailable for several days. The total cost of repairs to buildings in Port Hedland is estimated at $20 million, with $2.25 million needed on the destroyed hospital and $1 million on the Civic Centre. Heavy rainfall inland caused very significant flooding. Some of the two and three-day totals registered over the Hamersley Range represent in excess of a once in 100 year event. Repair costs to flood damage on roads and bridges after the passage of Joan was put at $1.5 million.
Bureau of Meteorology Report, Regional Office Perth: Severe Tropical Cyclone Joan 8 – 9 December 1975 (p. 2, 2009)

'Jackie-san—Oh Jackie, Jodie friend!' Jackie steps back, confused, as Jodie's Japanese neighbour erupts out of the duplex pair to her right and runs over. Mrs Kokkinos embraces her in an unashamed hug, the kind Mum gave her last year after she had gotten the phone call about Nana Kimball dying and there was nothing they could do to help half a world away. Jackie is stiff with surprise and dread for she doesn't know Mrs Kokkinos all *that* well and something must be very wrong. Jodie's neighbour is wailing something in Japanese-English that Jackie can't make out at all, so she just pats her awkwardly on the shoulder until she pulls herself together a little.

'Hey, Jackie. Hey, Nath.' She turns at the familiar voice and Jodie's younger brother Ian is standing there. He looks pale and small, his appearance at odds with his customary casual greeting. Rachel Cadogan appears behind her brother, carrying little Alice Kokkinos. She smiles at Jackie but it doesn't reach her eyes at all. Today everyone is tired, but here it is much more than a lack of sleep or worry over property damage and power cuts and spoilt food.

'What happened here last night—is everyone alright? And where's Jodie and your parents?' Jackie wants to know everything right now, just as much as she wants to turn and run away before anyone has the chance to answer.

These are big questions and there is a brief pause when no one seems to know what to say. Rachel brushes away a tear and Alice gently pats her face. Nathan stands there awkwardly, until Mr Kokkinos joins the group now assembled out the front of 73A. He tells them, *We all come inside and catch each other up, okay?* Then the SEC worker calls over to Mr Kokkinos that he has finished securing the property and is packing up some personal effects for the parents. He

will be ready to go in five minutes. Phil nods his thanks then ushers everyone into 73B. They pass an emergency services 4WD that is parked under the carport in place of the usual Landcruiser. Jackie wonders that she hadn't noticed it before. It is thickly splattered with sand and mud reaching halfway up the doors. A constant stream of disembodied voices crackles out from the two-way in the console.

Jackie has been inside 73B Crawford several times with Jodie and today it is as different as the rest of the world out there, stripped and bare and damp and colourless. She shakes her head *No thanks* when asked to sit. Instead, she holds her ground as the Crawford Street survivors tell the newcomers of the endless night when Joan came. Jackie gets a lurch deep in her guts when she hears of her best friend's condition, but remains standing. She wants to say what they are all thinking *Could she die? Will she?* but that will make it too real. So she says nothing, automatically grasping the dry tissue pressed into her hand. Mrs Kokkinos places an arm intended to comfort around her shoulders. Jackie's mouth fills up with warm saliva that tastes like metal and she is mortified that she has to go over to the sink and spit it out in front of everyone or she would be sick.

Mr Kokkinos appears not to notice, but tells her that Jodie will be scrambled out of Hedland on the first available plane, once the airstrip is clear and a takeoff can be made safely. The hospital staff are working to keep her stabilized, meanwhile, and her parents will go with her on the plane. Rachel and Ian will stay here with his family for a day or two, until it is safe for them to fly down to Perth.

Jackie nods, taking it all in and not wanting to be there. The man in the orange overalls opens the screen door and says *Okay, Phil, we're out of here.* He holds up a suitcase in evidence. Mr Kokkinos tips two fingers to his forehead in acknowledgement. He tells Jackie and Nathan to *Go home now and tell your parents.* Nathan agrees and follows the two men out of the door but Jackie hesitates. She's wondering what Jodie would want her to do, as this thought alone seems to be helping her to focus. She realizes she is pretty sure she knows.

Hugs are non-routinely exchanged with Mrs Kokkinos and Rachel as the SEC vehicle reverses, then cautiously fords a path down the driveway and bumps across what used to be Crawford Street. It turns down towards McGregor Street, making a new route across the verge and footpath on the opposite side. Jackie watches it go and is brought back by Nathan tugging on her arm.

'Come *on,* Jackie! We have to go home and tell Mum.' She looks down at him and his eyes are huge and his face pale.

'We will, squirt—just as soon as we can. But while we're over here, we have to tell someone else who will be just as worried about Jodie as we are. Come on, it won't take long.'

They call out goodbyes to the remaining residents of 73B and Jackie promises to call back as soon as she can. Then the girl and her brother cut down and across the corner verge. The sloped retaining wall beyond is slick and muddy in the drizzling rain and they have to take off their unaccustomed footwear and stay low to negotiate it. Before she had met her best friend, Jackie had had little contact with, or interest in, what she thought of as Old People. The relatives and family friends from previous generations have all been left back in England. They regress into foggy memory that recedes a little more each day. Then Jodie took her to meet Grandad Martin and Jackie started to see things a little differently.

Nathan follows Jackie along the retaining wall all the way around to the front gate, for it seems inappropriate to take Jodie's usual short-cut, straight over the top. They pull up short as they get a good look at the house for the first time. It is one of the newer, brick-and-tile homes built by the Mt Newman Mining Company a few years back to house its workers, and was surplus to requirements when Elanna Witte bought it three years ago. It appears to have weathered the cyclone badly, worse than many of the older and far shabbier fibre-cement and tin homes in the district. The roof seems to be completely gone, and the front windows have no glass left. Sand up to three feet deep in places is banked up against the outside wall and is caked into every inch of the brick rendering. Jackie has nerves of glass after the news about her best friend and now finds that her knees are wobbly and she can feel her heart beating too fast in her chest and her mouth again tastes like metal. She can't bring herself to knock for fear of what she might find inside. She stands rather stupidly, looking at the front door as the seconds stretch out. It is sandblasted almost back to bare wood but is relatively unscathed, compared with the rest of the front of the house. *What if those inside…injured…killed?*

Nathan looks at his sister quizzically and then steps past her. He can't understand what she's waiting for and just wants to get home, right now, and tell his mother. He knocks loudly on the hollow door and powdery sand coats his knuckles. They hear raised voices inside but there is no acknowledgement of their presence. Before Jackie can stop him, Nathan raps again, louder.

‘I can’t get the front door open—you’ll have to come ‘round to the back!’ Jackie recognizes Mrs Wittes’ hearty voice behind the door. She is shouting louder than she needs to but doesn’t sound particularly distressed. The girl lets out a painful lungful of air she didn’t even know she had been holding.

They step over broken roof tiles and bits of timber strewn over the front yard, scrabbling their way around to the rear of the house. Jackie tells Nathan to *Be Careful* because the side fence has held and there isn’t a lot of room and it’s muddy and slippery. She glances warily upwards, decides she doesn’t like walking under the house eaves. It is riddled up there with black holes that reveal tattered insulation fibres and bits of electrical wire. They keep going because they have come this far, but the side gate is also piled high with sand. Jackie stamps it down as firmly as she can and climbs over, relieved to see that the ground is a lot clearer on the other side. She jumps down on the other side and Nathan follows, kicking up sand bindies as he lands.

The kids make it to the back screen door and this is still on its hinges and clear of debris. Jackie is about to call out but Mrs Witte is already there to open it for them. The door catches against the swollen wooden step but she gives it a shove with her foot. It flies open so that Jackie has to step back to avoid getting whacked. Elanna Witt’s mad hair is pulled back with a hair lacky but little wispy bits have escaped, forming an orange halo around her face. She is wet and dishevelled, her legs caked in sand and mud. Her face registers surprise as she recognizes the visitors.

‘Jackie! And your little brother, too. Well, hallo there. Here’s me thinking it was Jodie and Ian. Come in, come in—it’s probably good timing as I was about to murder my Dad.’ Her mouth is set in a grim line but she winks as Jackie passes. The two kids follow her into the kitchen, where the lino is obliterated by yet more sand. Jackie is starting to think that the beach must have run out of the stuff. The wind eddies in through the ruined front windows and now Jackie is standing in a shallow indoor lake with water the colour of chocolate. She looks straight up and is disoriented by the clear sky above, the feel of the rain scything in. It’s not like being indoors at all.

They find Grandad Martin in the front room. He sits on the lounge on top of a heavy-duty rubbish bag, the large size used to line the council bins. One hand rests on his knee, the other holds a brightly striped umbrella above his head. His feet perch on a convenient sandbank

piled halfway up his chair. His two-and-a-half leather seater is the only serviceable piece of furniture remaining; the rest lies broken and scattered, half-buried, over the floor. Grandad Martin wears his sheepskin slippers and an extremely grumpy expression. Jackie just *knows* that Jodie would giggle at the sight of him, which makes her smile at the same time as the fear inside her gets heavier. He looks over as they enter the room, frowns in confusion a moment, before assuming the kindly expression he tends to reserve for kids. He, too, was clearly expecting the Cadogan kids.

'Well, Jackie…and her little brother, too.'

'Nathan.' Jackie's brother adds his name helpfully, knowing he is not a usual visitor.

Grandad Martin nods. Jackie is about to blurt out her terrible news but he has a lot bottled up this morning and gets in first.

'Well, how about that blow, heh? Worst one since 1939 when the town was flooded, I reckon. I should've been in my old house in Athol Street. Built it myself in 1956 and I bet it's ridden out the storm in better shape than this *brand new* one.' His voice drips sarcasm as his hand sweeps the bizarre room where the outdoors is now indoors.

'I'm *never* going to hear the end of this! He's been going on *and on* all morning.' Elanna sighs, theatrically. She sloshes in from the kitchen, carrying little handy-cans of Coke, which she hands out to the visitors. 'Here, may as well use these up before they go completely warm.' The kids accept them politely and Nathan cracks the ring-pull, gulps the fizzy treat down in one go. Jackie doesn't open hers. Mrs Witte doesn't notice as she surveys the room once again. She blows out a long sigh.

'Shame about those curtains, though; I made them myself ready for Christmas and it took *ages*.' There is only one left, still dangling by a few remaining hooks. It flaps sadly in the wind.

'We were probably doing alright until first light. Then Joan really starts and the winds are shaking the building and you can tell she's had enough tip-toeing about outside and wants to get in.' Grandad Martin is reliving it all again and it's making him angry because he hates feeling old and helpless.

'We did okay, though, didn't we, Dad?' Elanna's voice is uncharacteristically low. She leans against the doorframe, taking a break from the rather pointless mopping, at least until the rain stops or they can get a tarp up there, whichever happens first. 'We took the mattress off my bed and jammed it down in the hallway, right in the middle of the house. We had candles and

blankets and we just bunkered down.' She sips her drink and glances up the passage, remembering it all.

'Then the walls started to shake and vibrate and the hairs on my arms stood up. I could feel the pressure building, but there was no time to get a back window open to equalize it. Next thing, Joan got inside, after all.' Grandad Martin takes up the story. They are trying to build up a picture of it all so they can stand back and try and make sense of it. Jackie will not try to get a word in until she absolutely has to.

'A window in the front room went first, exploding like a bomb going off. Then the roof starts to go….we can hear the tiles popping off overhead *ping ping ping*, then ricocheting about and smashing like little missiles. She works her way into every cavity and crevice up there, gets a good hold, you see. There's a rending and a crashing and she prises the main part of the roof off, just tosses it away. It was like…a road train going through the house.' Grandad Martin looks skyward, his mouth open.

'It was the scariest thing I've ever been through!' His daughter can't help but interject. 'We could see part of the living room from down the passage. All of the furniture up against the wall…it started *moving*, sliding away all on its own.'

'The eddy current tore through the hole where the roof used to be. I didn't think that the walls would hold, but they did.' His voice trails off and he looks old, and tired. Elanna goes over to her Dad, sits down next to him on the shiny damp plastic. It makes a squidgy rustle.

'Well, they did, didn't they? And we're insured, so we can rebuild. We're lucky to have an emergency centre so close by and I can just walk over there a bit later and try and get some help to get a tarp up on the roof. Or maybe they'll come and find us first. The main thing is that we made it through okay. The rest is just *stuff*.'

There is a small silence with just the sound of the wind and the last curtain flapping and Jackie takes a breath.

'Not everyone made it through okay.' Her voice is small and wobbly and everyone is looking at her. She dreads adding to their worries, after all that has happened here already. But she also knows how dear these people are to Jodie and feels she has to tell them. She hates the fact that she has to put her hands up to cover her face just before she starts to cry.

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3.15pm

Cross Family residence: Mosely Street, Port Hedland

Mum barely waits until Jackie has finished talking before she envelopes her daughter in a damp and snuffly hug. Some detached part of Jackie's mind thinks *I haven't had this many hugs in one day since Nana Kimball died and it didn't help much then, either.*

'Oh that poor little bairn! God alive, she's been in some scrapes lately!' Mum dabs at her eyes with a tissue and forces another into Jackie's hand. She doesn't need it, as she has cried all the tears she has for now.

There is still no sign of Dad or Dennis. Nathan is starving so they have a snack of cheese sandwiches and yet more milk. The bread's been in the freezer so it is still nice and soft but this could be it for a while. Jackie only agreed to eat to keep her mother happy but is surprised at how hungry she is. They wash up afterwards and she dries the dishes slowly, worrying about Jodie. The worst part is the *Not knowing*.

She tells her mother all about Mrs Witte's house, including the state of her new curtains and Grandad Martin with his umbrella. Mum goes a bit quiet and decides to give the mopping and cleaning up a bit of a rest for a while.

'Do you think Jodie'll be okay?' Nathan trails in, carrying a well-creased *Action* comic with a shark and a tank on the cover. Mum tells him, *Not to worry, she's in good hands so all we can do now is to think positive.* They play 'Trouble' for a while on the kitchen table but nobody really gets into it. Nathan pops the popper annoyingly slowly, then misses the chance to take out Jackie's man one space from Home. Mum has the radio on and keeps getting distracted by the barrage of updates. They hear *no fatalities reported, however a ten-year-old girl is in a critical condition at the badly damaged Port Hedland District Hospital* and the game is over. Mum turns up the radio. An RAAF Dakota aircraft is already on its way from Pierce airport but it is not yet safe to attempt either landing or take-off at Hedland. All available emergency services are scrambling to clear the runway in time but persisting gale-force strength wind gusts are hampering efforts. The coverage veers off to pinpoint Joan's position inland; *tropical cyclone Joan is moving on a south to south-westerly track at about 14 km/h and pastoral properties at Mundabullangana, Mallina, Coolawanya, Hammersley and Mount Brockman have been placed on High Alert* but nobody is listening anymore. Jackie's best friend is on the news, under the

worst possible circumstances. After a few moments of silence, Jackie wonders out loud when it would be okay to go back to the Kokkinos' house to check if there are any updates.

'Not today, love. Everyone's been through enough for't moment. I'm sure they'll get 'lass out before dark but we'll keep 'radio on to keep us posted. Best if we at least try and get a good night's sleep tonight, so we can start fresh tomorrow.'

Jackie thought of the girl in the doll's house who won't sleep in her own bed again for a long time and decided they were very lucky. Perhaps unfairly so.

Chapter Fourteen: All Clear

The Premier, Sir Charles Court, and the Lord Mayor of Perth, Mr E. Lee Steere, said in a joint statement that the attitude of the people of Port Hedland was an example to all Australians in time of trouble. The intention of the Port Hedland community to harness its own reserves and exploit self-help to the utmost before seeking assistance was the highest possible expression of community pride and self-reliance.
The West Australian, Wednesday December 10, 1978 (front page)

8.15am Tuesday, December 9, 1975
Cross Family residence: Mosely Street, Port Hedland

ABC radio is still on and Lorraine is thankful she allocated batteries equal priority alongside long-life milk and candles during her cyclone preparations. The All Clear was given at 7am but Jodie has been the main story since the first breakfast bulletin—and probably most of the night before. The details are getting repetitive but, in the absence of anything new, the Cross family listens anyway:

Ten-year-old Jodie Cadogan, the only serious casualty to result from Cyclone Joan's onslaught upon Port Hedland early Monday morning, was successfully evacuated from the town late yesterday under trying conditions. An RAAF Dakota aircraft was scrambled from Pierce even as all available Hedland emergency services worked in buffeting winds to clear cyclone debris from the runway, which included an overturned Cessna 172 light aircraft. The RAAF plane carried a six-person Flying Squad of emergency medical staff as well as critical medical supplies and equipment, including a respirator. The team touched down at 4pm local time and worked to stablise the girl before taking off just under an hour later. The girl was accompanied by her parents, Gerald and Emily Cadogan, and Perth-based pediatric surgeon Dr Jeremy Waters. Dr Waters carried out emergency surgery on the girl early yesterday morning after she had suffered a traumatic head injury caused by a falling piece of furniture at the height of the cyclone. Matters were further complicated by the partial destruction of the Port Hedland District Hospital, which lost its casualty department and surgery in the cyclone. Fierce ground winds made the take-off and landing hazardous but the flight arrived safely in Perth at 9.15pm local

time. The girl was immediately transferred to Princess Margaret Hospital where she underwent further surgery. Her condition has been described as critical but stable.

Jackie is relieved that Jodie is stable but does not like the sound of the 'critical' part, or her best friend being referred to as 'the girl' all the time. She glances around the breakfast table and her Dad is looking at her but says nothing. He offers her more bacon and eggs cooked on the gas barbie. She shakes her head *No thanks* and gives him a weak smile. Dad says *Sure, love?* and continues to hold the plate out. Dad and Dennis were still out by the time she went to bed last night and are heading off again after breakfast. Neither seems to know how to behave around her, as though fearing she will shatter into a million tiny pieces if they say the wrong thing. Jackie sighs and accepts the plate, then forks another piece of bacon off it. It *was* a real treat, after all…and like everything else, it *Wants using*. Jackie decides to make an effort, if only to encourage them to behave a bit more normally towards her…at a time when 'normal' has been blown clean away.

'Any news from the council, Dad?' Jackie had no real clue what they'd been up to yesterday. Ernie visibly brightened at her interest.

'Nah that you mention it, lass—there's a meeting on today to tek stock of 'damage and organize a rebuilding programme, based on priority. There's going ter be alt' high-fliers in town, just as soon as they can get here.' He looks chuffed at the prospect. 'There's 'sposed to be 'Minster for Northern Australia, the mayor of Darwin—'

'A woman, she is too—Dr Stack.' Dennis interjects with some authority. 'The Darwin people are being *brilliant* in stepping up to help the town. They can relate, I guess, having been through Tracey almost a year ago.'

'Aye, there's offers of help *pouring* in from all over, it's grand. Anyway, this meeting—I shall pop in myself if there's standing room, for tradies are revered in this town at the moment. We certainly worked hard yesterday, eh, lad?'

Dennis nods, still a little awestruck by the aftermath of the storm he has witnessed but chuffed at the number and complexity of tasks entrusted to him. 'Most of it involved securing doors and windows and patching walls or tarping roofs, so people could at least stay in their own homes last night. It was hard work but we did good, I think.' He still carries the glow of gratitude and responsibility, an unexpected side-effect of something that he initially saw as nothing more than an escape from the confines of the house.

'We did at that, lad.' Ernie is proud of his boy and wonders where the years went. 'Getting 'power on is the top priority, of course—people will be left with a lot of rotting food if not. That's 'problem with above ground power, once your distribution system is taken out, it's all over.' Ernie heard a lot yesterday and as usual, is eager to share all the news with his family.

'The main power supply is from Redbank, about four mile out of town. Now, it's still operational, thanks ter' *Herculean* efforts of 'workers all night. But it's all for nought when the power lines get pulled down—miles of power poles, reinforced with railway iron and plaited every 100 yards or so. But….they're joined by tension wires stretched in between, so one goes, they all go. Like a concertina effect, you see. Now they're saying that 'power won't be restored for at least a week, but I've seen't damage. More like *six* weeks, I reckon.'

Lorraine is not happy. 'What about food, then—not ter mention laundry, 'ot water, contact wi' outside world! We won't be able ter manage—we'll 'ave to leave.'

Leave. Jackie feels her gut constrict at this most dreaded word. She doesn't want to go anywhere, even if it meant cold showers and living on crackers and water and no television. What about when Jodie gets back? She will be able to help her get better, as long as she is allowed to stay on in the town.

'Not to worry just yet, love. The airstrip's supposed to be clear for civilian flights this morning, so we can start getting supplies in. People have been marvellous so far—you've been hearing it ont' radio. Darwin's got hundreds of portable generators and tarps left over from Tracy, even fresh bread on standby and I reckon we'll start getting stuff in later today. BHP, Goldsworthy and Mount Newman Mining companies are also 'elping out any way they can, releasing employees to help clean up the town site and diverting power to the town. The main thing is, we've still got a roof—literally—over us heads. Not like a lot of folk have right now. Dennis and I know; we've seen it for ourselves.' Jackie wants to add *We've seen it too* but there's no point. Dad gets up from the table, nods to Dennis, who also stands up.

'Rightho then, we'll love yer and leave yer.' He drops a kiss on top of his wife's head, hesitates. 'You know, I think we could stay in this town a while longer. It kind of…grows on you, know what I mean?' Ernie spreads his hands palms down, looking at them thoughtfully.

'Must be all this red dust…it gets under your skin and yer can't wash it out.' He looks up at his daughter, gives her a wink. 'Besides, there will be a *lot* of work on for quite a long time. I

was talking ter a Port Authority worker yesterday, and he said they don't call 'em cyclones…they call 'em trade winds. Because of alt' trade they bring into 'town.'

For the first time since finding out about her best friend, Jackie smiles, a real smile. Her mother notices, goes over and gives her another snuffly hug. 'Come on, then, lass, let's get cleared up.'

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Mum's gotten back on with her cleanup, so, as soon as their jobs are done, Jackie and Nathan take off, out of the way. Today there's still a bit of drizzle about but the pressing sense of unease has lifted. The wind has dropped back to a warm breath. Jackie thinks they might check back in with Grandad Martin and Elanna and maybe help out, so they head back up Sutherland Street. The road is clear in places already and people are moving about freely. Dotted with human life and colour, yesterday's desolation is today tempered with a sense of optimism. People want to get out there and start cleaning up and getting on with their lives.

In the front yard of a flat-roofed house with its windows blown out, three Dads in work boots, stubbies and checked shirts pitch in with wheelbarrows and shovels to clear a mate's driveway. *Like the snow shovelling they have to do in America in winter*, *but here it's sand.* They've achieved the only clear verge on the street so far but have only just started. One Dad leans on his shovel as they pass, flicks the ash off his smoke and grins at them. *Alright, kids?* Jackie and Nathan grin and wave back. A collective of eight or so little children play on the growing pile of sand on the strangely ordered verge, giggling. The next house up, Leonie and Natalie Weaver from school wave as they half-heartedly shovel sand into a wheelbarrow. Their Mum holds a baby on her hip and supervises. There is much eyeball rolling amongst them and Jackie is reminded of the fate that awaits her and Nathan, once her Dad finishes up helping out around the town and brings their tools and wheelbarrow back. They chat briefly, agreeing to meet up down the beach this afternoon. Their Mum says *Only if you're done here, young ladies!*

With every person encountered, Jackie feels her mood lifting. She wishes Jodie was here now, because she would understand. People are happy to be safe and just want to get on with the job of cleaning up and putting their lives back together. It's been on the radio non-stop, about how much work Hedland people have ahead of them—shovelling sand and mopping water out of

houses, nailing down roofs and patching walls. There was a lot to worry about, too: no power, rotting food, fallen power lines, flooding, closures to the port, roads and airstrip. It was also early in the cyclone season and there was the real risk of another blow hitting the town before they'd had chance to put the pieces back together after Joan. Instead, Jackie thought about her Dad and brother tearing off to the Civic Centre to help and the Dads pitching in together to clean up each other's yards and reckoned that this town would be okay. With a little lurch, she hopes that Jodie will be okay, too.

They round the loop at Crawford Street and find the Yates kids, equipped with inevitable shovels, out the front of their place. They're digging down to try and find the lawn. They also go to Cooke Point Primary; Christine is in Jackie's year whilst her older brother, Mark, is in Grade Seven. They don't need much of an excuse to down tools and talk to the Cross kids. Christine tells them they are lucky to be allowed out and Mark reckons they have been at this for *hours.* Nathan tells them their Dad has taken all the shovels and the wheelbarrow with them and Christine says she wishes *Dad was a tradie instead of a boring old Bank Manager, I mean, what use is he to anyone?* Jackie laughs out loud and agrees with her. Then the talk turns to Jodie, as it inevitably must, for she is all over the radio. Jackie finds it draining to keep going over it all but is lifted up by their genuine concern. It could have happened to any one of them. *Why Jodie? She's one of the sunniest kids ever, why her?* Jackie doesn't know, either.

'Righto, gotta keep going.' Nathan doesn't like the fact that his sister has gone suddenly quiet. Of course he's worried about her, and Jodie, but he also knows that, if she decides to go home, he will have to go as well—no way would Mum let him wander about so soon after the cyclone on his own.

'Where ya goin'?' Mark places his feet on either side of his spade, balancing as it sinks into the sand. He is clearly bored out of his mind.

Nathan looks at Jackie, who shrugs. 'Thought we might go see Grandad Martin and Mrs Witte. They lost the roof and were knee-deep in water and sand yesterday. Maybe we can help out a bit.'

Mark looks at his sister Christine, who grins slowly. The Yates kids know of Grandad Martin, just like everyone else. Clearly nothing but good can come out of this: they can help out some decent people *and* get out of yet more mindless shovelling. Christine yells *Hang on a mo'*

and drops her spade where she stands. She tears off through the front door and is gone less than two minutes, re-emerging with a six-pack of handycans.

'No probs—Mum says we can go help out. As long as we *Be Careful*!' She pulls a face, sighs. 'And she gave us these, because they are going warm and Want Using.' Christine passes out the Fantas and Jackie thinks she has never had so many cans of cool drink and bacon in twenty-four hours.

They wander down Crawford Street, slurping their drinks and sticking to the verge as the council hasn't gotten down here yet to clear up the road. They get to number 73 and Jackie decides to call in to see if Rachel and Ian want to come along. The other kids wait at the bottom of the driveway while she hurries up and knocks on 73B. She is gone a little while but nobody is in any hurry. Nathan swaps cyclone stories with the Yates kids, who have also made it through fairly well, apart from some water in the house and a trashed backyard. Mark tells Nathan that, if the power's not up within a few days, *Dad's work will fly Mum and Us kids down to Perth until the town gets itself sorted out*. Christine tells Nathan her Dad's been saying that they want to get as many women and kids out of town as possible, until the rebuilding's well and truly underway.

'We've still got running water, but Dad reckons, with all the flooding, it's only a matter of time before the town's water supply is contaminated. Besides, it's a bit dodgy around here at the moment—did you hear about that Labrador getting electrocuted?' Yesterday, one of their Dad's customers lost the family pet when it discovered a live wire curling around the house.

'Dad reckons it was bloody lucky 'cos there were four kids at the place who could've walked into it first. It's really sad about the dog but it probably saved some kid's life.' Christine is obviously upset about the incident.[12] Nathan thinks it's a shame that a beautiful labbie got zapped instead of Dollymix the cat but can't be bothered saying anything.

Jackie bangs out of 73B with Ian Cadogan in tow. Mrs Kokkinos follows, calling. Jackie pulls up and goes back to accept something and another hug from her. She calls out *Thanks!* and waves, goes down the driveway to rejoin the group. She holds out a packet of *Chips Ahoy* cookies, smiles wryly. 'Apparently, they Want Using.'

Ian scores a handycan of Fanta and Jackie passes out the bikkies. Everyone tells him they are sorry to hear about Jodie. He shrugs. He is paler than usual, making his freckles stand out,

[12] The tragic death by electrocution of the O'Meara family's pet Labrador, Ceasar, was reported on the front page of *The Daily News,* Wednesday, 10 December 1975 (City Ed.).

and his eyes are blurred blue-grey along their sockets, but he manages a passable impersonation of his cheeky grin. Jodie's plight has captured the entire town's attention and 73B has been inundated with well-wishers and offers of help. Rachel has gone away overnight to a friend's place over on Gratwick Street, just to have a bit of a break. Ian tells them that Jodie's accident has hit his older sister hard and she's not coping very well. They all go a bit quiet until Ian mentions Pablo, the Badassed Chihuahua. Jackie gasps.

'Crikey, I'd forgotten all about him! Has Mr Kokkinos killed him yet? Oh, jeez, has he bitten Alice?' Jackie is genuinely concerned, for the thought of that crazy thing living in close quarters with a toddler makes her shudder. Jackie had been there when Jodie got lazy once and picked him up to put him outside without the garden gloves on. He went berserk and shredded two of her fingers, blood everywhere. She wore mercurochrome and band-aids for a week. Now Jackie wonders if she should offer to take the psycho mutt for them but knows it won't go well if Dollymix the cat makes it home. Which he will, because he always does.

'Actually, no—he *likes* Alice.' Ian nods at the incredulous look Jackie gives him. 'We were using a broom to keep him away from her and locked him in the laundry, which just made him grumpier, if that's possible. Then we all got distracted the first time we heard about Jodie on the radio and forgot about him for a while. So then we heard Alice *giggling* in the laundry. Momoko panicked, she didn't think Alice could get in there by herself but she's smart. So we all run in there and Alice has him *on her lap—'*

'No!' Jackie can't comprehend it.

'Yep, swear on my Steve Austin action figure.'[13] Ian is deadly serious.

'Whoa,' says Nathan.

'And she's *patting* him, honest! And he's got his little pink tongue out and he's being really cute and Alice is saying *Ah, dog-dog!* or something. His hackles went up when Mr Kokkonis went in there, though, so we all backed up and left him alone until Alice gets up and goes over to Momoko to be picked up.'

'Really cute,' says Nathan slowly. 'Yep.'

'He *is* cute, I've seen him.' Christine puts her twenty cents' worth in and cops a group eyeball roll from the rest of them. She huffs and stuffs down another chocolate chip cookie.

[13] Steve Austin is the title astronaut of *The Six Million Dollar Man*, a popular television series that aired from 1974 to 1978. The show was a 1970's pop culture phenomenon and spawned an extensive range of spin-off toys and merchandise ([IMDbPro.com: The Six Million Dollar Man).

'Yep, and now Mr Kokkonis reckons they'll take care of Pablo when we go down to Perth.' Ian shrugs. 'I don't get it, either. It's like Alice is *magic* or something. Of course, no one leaves her alone with him, but still…I wouldn't let that psycho mutt near her.'

Jackie goes a bit quiet, wondering how many kids will be left in town by the end of the week. She's used to having a group to run with in Hedland, where there's always someone hanging around. She's lived in places where the kids are 'clicky' as Mum calls it, divided into groups and closed off to newcomers. There's none of that here. The town has such a transient population that no one has time for any of that stuff. The kids pretty much just run together and, if you want to come along, fine. Nobody cares one way or another—it's just that kind of place.

They are about to cut over to Grandad Martin's house when somebody calls out, *Hey, you guys! Check it out!*

They turn and Jackie recognizes Ben and Cameron, the two youngest Lewis kids from the house on the corner of Sutherland and Crawford. Their Dad's a mining director for BHP, head-hunted all the way from Boston in America. They are the New Kids and wear baseball caps and baggy t-shirts with *Red Sox* on them. They speak like the characters on Sesame Street, which is kind of weird, kind of funny and yet, kind of cool. Local kids have already started to copy their sayings, including *Awesome* and *No way.* They stand on the retainer slabs on the pool side of Crawford Street with *stuff* in their arms, yelling, *Hey guys! Check it out—free candy!*

'Free *what*?' Nathan is confused.

'Lollies. Cookie Monster reckons candy is almost as good as cookies, remember?' Nathan doesn't, but wonders why Christine has such an in-depth knowledge of *Sesame Street.*

'Come on, let's go see.' Christine's brother Mark, as the oldest, has suddenly elected himself leader. He starts picking his way across the Crawford Street gutter. Jackie holds her ground.

'What about helping Grandad Martin and Mrs Witte?'

'Plenty of time for that later. Come *on*, can't hurt to go for a look!' Mark doesn't even slow down. The others are all following him but Jackie calls Nathan back, who turns with an exaggerated *What?!* but returns anyway.

'I don't think we should go—I reckon they're up to no good. Come on, let's go help Grandad Martin.' She pulls her little brother by the elbow, but Nathan holds his ground.

'Aw, come on, Jackie—it doesn't hurt to go have a look. We can always leave.' His sister is uncompromising, so he says the worst thing, which is the only thing that will budge her.

'Let's just go *see*, so you can tell Jodie all about it when she gets back. She's missing all this and you know she'd want to go.' Nathan is at his most earnest and Jackie just stands there and looks at him, torn between hugging him and whopping him one. With an exaggerated sigh, she waves at him to *Lead on, squirt,* hoping she won't regret it later.

It's a bit hairy getting across the street, but they all have some kind of footwear on, for a change, thanks to the new post-cyclone rules set by seemingly every parent in Hedland. Once up on the verge, Jackie sees where Mark is going and hollers *Hey, that's trespassing*!

He stops, holds his hands palms up in confusion. 'Are you *crazy,* lady? There's not exactly a fence here anymore, y'know!'

The others catch up and look around. They are actually standing inside the pool property, but it's hard to tell because the chairs are all missing, stacked away. The wire fence is flattened and torn away—something has hit it during the storm, *hard,* and the ground under their feet is chopped up pretty bad. Cameron backtracks over and they get a good look at what's in the American boy's hands. He's taken off his baseball cap and crammed it to overflowing with Choo-choo bars, Crazy Mazes, Redskins, Kit-Kats, Bellboy and Black Cat bubblegum, Lifesavers…the Lewis boys have hit the jackpot. Nathan gawks and Ian goes *Whoa.* Jackie gets an uneasy feeling.

'Where'd ya get all *those*?' Nathan is virtually drooling.

'Come on, guys, check this out!' Cameron takes off towards the pool building and the rest follow, but Jackie is brought to a dead stop as she sees the state of the pool. All of the kids hang out here for nine months of the year. The pool is second only to the beach in popularity and number one in the summer months, because Hedland beaches are not great for swimming. Jackie knows that the local kids spend hours here, buying Freezas at the canteen that stain lips and tongues red, having races and practising bombies (except when the pool guard yells at you), *until you get cold then you get out and lie on the hot pavers until the shivering stops and your skin is almost burning, so you jump in again and the cold water makes you stop breathing for a moment*. But now the impossibly blue water has turned muddy chocolate brown, blotting out the black lane lines on the pool floor. Long sheets of metal lay half-in and half-out of the water in places and the round shade structure over the kiddie pool has been torn away. Only a few of the

tall palm trees that lined the far fence remain, most of them pushed down into the new sand dunes below by a giant hand. The kiddie pool is just a muddy puddle and the Olympic pool is two-thirds empty. The diving pool is over on the far side facing the ocean, past the deep end of the Olympic pool. Jackie can't see any water in it from where she stands, only bare walls stained streaky red. The small board is still there but the high diving platform sticks up out of the hole below.

Jackie hears yelling coming from the canteen kiosk so she rounds the building and skids to a halt. *Wow.* A massive rust red girder has taken out the pull-down security door, tearing it up and across like a big sheet of tinfoil. Cameron's up on the stainless steel counter, helping Christine into the kiosk. They have to be careful because there's jagged metal at the top and the immense beam is still propped up against the counter. Nathan and Mark are in there already. Jackie can't believe what she's seeing.

'Guys, come on, think about it—if you don't get busted for stealing you'll get yourselves killed in there! Nathan, get *out* of there *NOW*! Her brother winces at the sound of her voice, but does not move, not just yet.

Cameron looks at her, clearly annoyed. 'Oh, come ON, who brought Mom along? Most of the candy's gotten wet anyway and they'll just chuck the lot once the insurance company's done. Has to be *something* in it for us after all that's happened!'

'Are you completely nuts? The Civic Centre's right *there*, you'll get done, for sure!' Jackie jerks her finger over her shoulder at the adjacent council chambers.

'The pool's not occupied so no-one cares—they're too busy with everything else going on in town at the moment.' Ben's been listening to his Dad, who was an emergency services volunteer back in Boston. Their father fronted up to help at about the same time as Ernie, Nathan and Jackie's father.

'Come on, Jackie, don't be such a grump. We're being *really* careful and, besides, be a shame to let this stuff go to waste.' Nathan calls over to his sister from inside the kiosk. He adds, 'Besides, it Wants Using!'

Jackie lets out an involuntary burst of laughter at that and finds herself relenting just a little. Nathan had that effect on her and it drove her crazy. *Aw, let Dennis get back to being the oldest, for goodness sake.* She approaches the counter cautiously, still nervous about the whole thing. Technically, it wasn't really stealing—was it?

Mark flips open one of the thick stainless steel ice-cream doors and plunges his arm in up to the pit. His face wrinkles up and he says *Gross* before pulling it out covered in a chocolaty sludgy mess.

'Nice one,' says his sister Christine.

'Yum,' adds Ian. 'Save some for me.'

Mark flicks his arm about a bit so that Christine says *Yuk, get away* and backs away from him. Jackie tells them to *Watch out for that massive girder.* He mops at his arm with some soggy brown bags he finds underneath the counter; the kind used for putting sausage rolls and pies into, along with a tomato sauce packet for an extra two cents.

'The floor's *really* wet,' says Christine, tip-toeing around in there. 'And there's glass down here, too—bottles or something has fallen over.' Jackie makes an exasperated growling noise and tells them to *Hurry up!*

Nathan's at the lolly counter checking out what's left. There's mud and water splattered up the wall and over most of the brightly coloured boxes. It looks very different today and Jackie can't shake the feeling of *wrongness* seeing them in there, instead of the usual canteen ladies. Not a place where kids are meant to be.

'The Sherbert Fountains are history,' says Nathan, picking up a couple and squeezing. They disintegrate in a soggy mess. 'Same with the Fags and the licorice straps. Oh, yuck!' He pokes at a bright pink sloppy mess that used to be a box of musk sticks.

'Go with the wrapped ones, buddy, they should be okay still.' Cameron is still up on the counter, giving instructions. Mark looks for a bin to chuck the mess of paper in, gives up and tosses it on the counter behind. Transporting the contraband proves to be a bit of a challenge, as none of the kids, apart from the Lewis boys, wears a hat and there are only tiny pockets in the boys' stubbies and boardies. Jackie fares about the best as she's wearing her jeans with the legs rolled up to her knees because she's run out of clean shorts. Nathan is about to pass a double handful of lollies over the counter when a wailing siren passes close by on McGregor Street. Ben looks left and sees a flashing light through the trees. It's going past, then slows.

'You guys—it's the *cops*! Move it, gotta go now! The American kid's bravado is gone, his panic infectious. Nathan throws the lollies at Jackie, who catches a few, but leaves the rest to scatter in the muddy water below. Mark is tall and he's up and sliding over the counter, but he forgets to keep low and his head grazes the torn shutter above. He doesn't seem to notice. His

sister Christine is having problems getting out of the kiosk. Cameron and Jackie grab an arm each, but she can't get herself up. Her feet scrabble for something to push against and she can't see what she's doing. She finds something hard, tries to stand up on it to lever herself up and it gives way beneath her.

'Look out—it's going over! Holy *crap!'* Ben's voice rises above the unnerving rasp of metal on metal. The massive girder's precarious lean against the stainless steel counter gives out and it slides in slow-motion to the end of the bench and disappears. The dull *whumph* of its landing is hidden behind the counter but they can feel the vibration, and the water beneath their feet ripples. Jackie's gut lurches violently and there's a roaring in her ears.

She can't see Nathan.

Chapter Fifteen: Excavation

And on June [Van Uden's] street [Sutherland], there were some cars that had just been sand-blasted: there was no paint left on them. And the sausage tree out the front of my place—and they are really huge, strong trees—it had just leaned over onto my mini…and pushed it into the ground, up to the axles. It still went…and the bloke next door, who was the airline mechanic, he bought it off me for about $200. It was on a lean, but he actually put it back together, gradually…and it was still chugging around Hedland when I left.
Interview with Tina Moone, 7 October 2011

'Nathan! Nathan Oh, crap crap crap—' Jackie is the first to move and is up on the countertop, without thinking about it. She peers over, already seeing two little feet sticking out beneath that massive object *in the mud and the sand he's a goner he can't survive that no no no not Nath he's too small me instead me please it's my fault not fair*

Nothing. No sign of him. Unless he's completely hidden by it, *he must be it's so big*.

'What can you see? Is he okay? Move over and let me up there—' Cameron's voice is shaking a little, even as he tries to sound authoritative. Jackie rounds on him, her voice wobbly and cracking with rage.

'Don't you *dare* come anywhere near us! This is all your fault you, you—Yankee *fuckwit*!' Cameron goes pale and takes a step back. All his bluster is gone and he looks like he's going to cry. Jackie faces him down a moment, *that* word, the worst word she knows, torn from her throat unbidden and seeming to hang in the air in letters of fire.

'Whoa, Jackie—what's *that* worth in the swear jar, a *twenty?!'* Nathan steps out from the far side of the Coke fridge. Jackie gawks at him. He looks at the big rusty girder lying on the same patch of floor he was standing on a few moments ago. Then his gaze reaches his sister and his eyes are big. His first step is a bit unsteady but he rights himself, picking his way past as though the thing might come to life and roll on him. He reaches the counter and Jackie pulls her little brother up and enfolds him in a hug the size of which she hasn't done since he was four years old and heartbreakingly cute.

'Jackie! *Jeez* Louise…let go already!' Nathan squirms, embarrassed, and she lets him down before they both topple off the counter. Ian punches him in the arm and says *loser* and he is only half-joking. He had seen Jackie's face in that moment of panic and knew better than most

what she had just gone through. A siren *pur-wheeps* a warning in the car park outside and Ben yells, *Cops!*

A minute ago, the police would have been the most welcome presence in the world but no one is dead or dying anymore so all bets are off. Nathan sees his mother's face as he gets brought home in a police van and takes off at a dead run. He's fast, too, but Jackie is still pumping adrenalin and is barely a step behind him. The others are right behind them and now there's a pack of kids, dashing across the pool enclosure, over the ruined fencing and down the littered verge of Crawford Street towards the beach. Nathan doesn't slow until they hit the sand dunes.

Or what were the sand dunes. Now there's a steep drop instead, the sand razed like an open-cut mine. Christine is at the back and still going full pelt when the rest pull up. Her brother Mark has to grab her or she would have been straight over. She recovers her balance, bends double with her hands on her knees, panting and sobbing.

'I'm suh suh suh sorry,' she hiccups, her raggedy breath making her words hard to understand.

Mark sucks in a lungful of air, catches his breath. He pats his sister on the back awkwardly. 'S'okay mate, you didn't go over—no harm done.'

Christine straightens, wipes at her streaming eyes with a sticky hand and shakes her head vehemently. 'No, nuh-nuh-not *that*. I meant for nearly *killing* Nathan back there!' she howls into her hands. Ben awkwardly offers her a hanky, of all things, a big white square thing with blue edging. Ian shrugs at Jackie *must be an American thing*. Christine plucks it off him gratefully and blows her snotty nose in it, wipes her streaming eyes and offers it back. Ian screws his face up at Jackie in disgust, the way he does when it's meat loaf with the bits of boiled onion in it for dinner. Ben just shakes his head politely No*, you keep it buddy, honest, I insist*.

'It *was* an accident, Christine— and I *am* still here, y'know. Don't worry about it.' Nathan chips in, trying his best to be reassuring. This sets Christine off again and she enfolds him in a soggy hug. Nathan makes the meat loaf face, too, and does his best to pull free. Cameron says nothing and looks down, pokes at a bit of dried seaweed with his toe. Jackie glances over at him, thinks that the time will probably come when she apologizes for calling him *that* word, but it won't be today.

She flops down on her belly near the new cliff edge, looks out over the top at it all and feels her heart return to a more normal rhythm. She doesn't know what to do now, how to behave or where to go where it feels safe. She looks out over the black-and-white façade of what used to be their beach, misses the colours that have been washed out of the sky and the water and the reefs and the sand. She wishes for blue, wishes for yesterday. *This town is my book, my best book…but now the pages have all been torn out.*

Christine's big brother Mark is rubbing the top of his head, saying it feels hot and itchy and weird. His hand comes away and it's still sticky from the ice-cream goo but now there's a layer of brown hair and dark red rust covering his fingertips. He says *Ohmigawd I'm going bald* and Christine has a look and gasps. So they all have a look and there's a bare red patch on the top of his head spotted with tiny dark globs of blood where he *just* clipped the torn kiosk roller.

'You came *that* close to getting scalped.' Nathan holds up finger and thumb a tiny bit apart, clearly in awe. 'Whoa.'

'That's gonna *sting,'* adds Christine observationally.

Mark groans. 'I'm going to have to get me one of them baseball caps, now.' He looks over at Cameron. 'If Mum finds out, I'll be locked up 'til Christmas. She's still nuts after that dog got zapped.' The American kid is eager to make amends and says he will find him a spare cap at home. *No problemo—we've got plenny, buddy.*

'I think we should probably go home, now.' Jackie's voice is low and she's facing out to sea again but Nathan hears her. He doesn't try and change her mind.

'Yeah, probably right.' His spark is gone and that makes his sister feel even worse.

'Before you go, at least have some of these. You guys sure earned *something* after all that.' Ben squats down and dumps his brother's baseball cap on the ground. The contraband is almost all still in there and Jackie can't believe he managed to hang onto it while running flat out. She remembers her own pockets and goes through them, pulls out a few Bell Boy bubble gums, a squished Kit Kat and a couple of really bendy Choo Choo Bars. There's not a lot left but there should be enough to share. Jackie nibbles at a Redskin then pulls a face; it's too soft and tastes watery. Ian says his bubblegum has sand in it *Eww it's crunchy* then Christine wrinkles up her nose and says *These Lifesavers taste like chalk, they're disgusting.* There's a bit of an awkward silence then Mark cups his hands to his mouth and does a cop siren/megaphone impersonation, *Ber-whoop whoop! Attention you kids running off down the street there! Drop*

those completely disgusting stolen lollies or you're under arrest! There's a little pause, then Ian says earnestly, *Well, Officer, it was like this…there was this little kitten stuck in the pool kiosk so we went in there to rescue her and she looked hungry so we grabbed her some lollies…*Jackie pretend-swipes him to the back of his head and they both laugh, until they all end up losing it.

Ian jumps up and declares that they should explore the beach. Nathan looks at his sister but says nothing. Jackie remembers her earlier sense of urgency but is pleased to see Ian looking a bit brighter, after all that happened to his sister. She decides *Stuff it, they should go ahead and do it before they run out of time…before the kids have all left town after the cyclone*. Nathan and Ian air-punch and say *Yesss!* and help Cameron bury the sad remains of their contraband. There's a brown stain inside the rim of his baseball cap from something chocolate that squished (probably a *Kit-Kat*) but he says *I'll leave it there because I'll remember today for a long time*. He looks at Jackie and it's sort of an apology but not quite. Jackie doesn't quite smile back at him but decides that maybe he's not such a *that* word, after all.

They move further down looking for a safer place to cut through but there's no sand at all to walk in so they end up ploughing on over the never-ending mess of springy black seaweed. A few midges and sandflies rise up as they tramp through it all, but it's going to get a lot worse once the sun comes back and goes to work on it all. For now, the wind is keeping the smell down but in a few days it'll stink all up and down the beach. Better to take a look today, for sure. The black seaweed mess covers everything from the spinifex to the sand, extending all the way down to the water. There it floats in a gleaming vast layer, shifting and moving uneasily on the lowering tide. Jackie looks at the dark water and it seems to be watching her. It looks wrong *like the world is seeping out around the edges.*

Mark yells. The rest of the kids hurry over and he's pulling sludge off a big mound that looks like a small dune, but it's a funny shape. Jackie pulls at a handful of crispy seaweed and her fingertips come away bloody, stinging. She jumps back, flinging away the black stuff in a bit of a panic. Christine yells *Shark!* and they're all looking back at the sea, the horizon. *Where?!* Then Jackie looks back and sees it, you can't miss it and they all start pulling stuff off it. They get most of the head uncovered and it's massive, all twisted shut in a massive brown net that slices careless fingers. Ben has a knife, which Jackie thinks *must be an American thing too*, but it's a little Swiss Army job and he saws away fruitlessly for a few minutes before giving up in disgust. They find its eye, poke away the seaweed around it with a bit of driftwood. It's black

and shiny, oozing grey jelly stuff that the midges have found already. Christine thinks it's *gross* but keeps digging, along with the rest of the kids. Jackie tells them to *watch out for the skin it's like sandpaper.* They keep at it for ages, then sit back, worn out.

'It doesn't look right; it's a funny shape, like it's been sat on by something even bigger.' Ian tilts his head to get a different angle.

'That's because it doesn't have the water to support it anymore, so it's collapsing from the inside out.' Mark's the oldest and they listen to him.

They sit in a line in front of the shark. Everyone is interested in the fin, because that's the bit they always show on the trailers for 'Jaws', but it's bent over and hidden by more stinking seaweed. The tail is still covered, too, but they're all too tired to scrape away any more. Its mouth should be the most interesting bit, but you can't really see the teeth because the mouth is frozen shut.

'Sorry way to go,' Jackie says, wishing it hadn't ended up like this.

'Seems a shame.' Cameron agrees, but he could still be trying to make amends.

'Don't be an idiot,' says Christine. 'It's a Great White, like in *Jaws.* A monster—it *eats* people.' Ben says their Dad took him and Cameron to see the movie and Jackie decides that American parents must be a lot less strict than English ones. Cameron reckons it scared him stupid but his brother said, *It was okay but the shark looked fake*. Jackie looks at the shiny black eye oozing goo. This doesn't look real, either.

'Is this as big as the one in *Jaws,* then?' Ian is awestruck by the size of their shark. The Yates boys are accepted as the resident experts because the movie is rated R and no one else is allowed to see it. Ben considers and says *Yeah, reckon so*.

'It *is* really big, though.' Mark is thoughtful. 'No grown-up's going to believe how big, unless we can measure it, somehow.'

'How can we do that? Unless Cameron's got a tape measure under his baseball cap, too.' Nathan jerks a thumb at the American kid, who grins cautiously.

Jackie looks at Ian. He's the smallest. He looks back and says, *No way*.

They lie him down in front of Jaws and draw a line in the sand where his feet end. Then he moves up so that his head is level with the line and they mark it again, repeating until they reach where the tip of the shark's tail would be, if not for the seaweed. They count six-and-a-bit-Ians long. *Right, that'll do then.* They sit back again and just *look* at it a bit more.

'Hope they get the pool fixed soon,' Christine says what they all are thinking. It *is* a really big shark.

'How about we all go over to your place when Jodie gets back and use that little above ground job of yours, Ian? Mark has been over once or twice and couldn't see the point of it either, until now.

Ian laughs but it is not a happy sound. 'Nope, sorry, no can do. Clean blew away—just a circle in the sand left.'

'No *way*,' Nathan says.

'Some wind, that cyclone, huh? Took out the pool, all those houses, the beach, even this guy.' Mark's voice is bleak, like it's all just starting to sink in. He doesn't sound like the oldest anymore. Jackie looks from him to the black net twisted around its massive head and says, *I don't think it was Joan did this.* A drizzling rain starts up, the misty kind that settles on your skin then sinks in.

The group breaks up after that. Everyone decides to head home for lunch and to report their find to their parents. Ben stipulates firmly *the shark NOT the pool kiosk OR the lollies* and Cameron pretend-punches him in the arm. Mark reckons the adults will come down later and take the jaws out, mount them above the bar in the yacht club. That sounds wrong to Jackie, but as the shark is beyond saving, she lets it go.

'One thing's for sure, they're going to have to move it soon or it'll stink all down the beachfront within a week.' Nobody argues with Mark over that one. 'Reckon they're going to need a front-end loader to move it, though. One for the grown-ups to worry about.'

Jackie and Nathan trudge home, negotiating the debris without a second thought. Jackie thinks, *You can get used to anything given a bit of time.* They are surprised to find the Landrover parked out the front of their house.

'Looks like Dennis and Dad came home for lunch, too.' Jackie shrugs. 'Wonder how Mum's food supplies are going?'

'Cold tinned sardines on crackers with longlife milk for lunch—yummy!' Nathan makes a face and Jackie knows that he is only half-joking. Their mother already has a habit of coming up with interesting food combinations for no reason at all. With no power and dwindling fresh supplies, she would definitely start *improvising.* They had no hope.

They hear their father's voice inside from across the front yard and it sounds as if he's not happy about something. It doesn't take long to figure it out.

'—that bloody moggie's got to go. 'Orrible thing tried to kill me!' They bang in the front door and Ernie is nursing his right hand, which is wrapped in a blood-stained tea towel. He glares at them by way of greeting.

'Oh, hallo you two,' Mum's voice is even. 'Yer Dad's found Dollymix the cat.'

'Told you he'd come back,' Jackie shrugs at Nathan, who is deflated by the news.

'Dad was getting blood everywhere, so I got to drive the Landrover,' says Dennis, still triumphantly twirling the car keys. This cyclone was turning out better and better.

'You're only fourteen! When can *I* have a go, then?' Nathan is about to protest further when he sees his mother's withering look.

'Where was he?' Jackie knows that the cat could have been anywhere.

'He were hiding int' back of 'bloody Landrover! I get 'back open to fetch me toolbox and that *thing* explodes at me. Lucky I got me hand up or it'd have me eyes out!' Ernie waves his afflicted hand about indignantly. 'I'm tekkin' that bloody cat ter' vet fert' Green Dream, just as soon as things are sorted.' Ernie has said this many times before. Nathan hopes he means it this time. Lorraine tells her husband to *Shurrup you, while I tek a look at it* and pops open the clips on the First Aid box.

Jackie goes to find Dollymix the cat, who is in the laundry. He is tucking into a tin of the dread sardines, so she figures that Nathan would be happy about that, at least. Dollymix puts his ears back and hisses as she tries to approach, so she steps back and says *Easy you big old psycho cat* and he returns to his bowl, growl-purring as he eats while glaring at her out of the side of his mustard-green eyes. She stands there for a few minutes, looking at him. He's thin and mean and rusty red and hasn't changed a bit, although he's gotten his bony tail trapped or trodden on by the looks of the new kink in it. Jackie feels her mood lifting and realizes with surprise that she is actually pleased to see him. Mum's always called him her *one constant thing* when everything else keeps changing. Now he's a single page recovered from a battered book, on a day when the rest of the chapters all seem to be missing. Even if it *is* a tatty page that has to be sticky-taped back in there.

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1.45pm
73 (A and B) Crawford Street

Phil Kokkinos keys his way into 73A next door. He's home for now but expects to get called in to work this evening, once the port channel is clear. Several smaller vessels have sunk in the turning basin of the harbour, which will need to be cleared out and the depth tested. Only then can the glut of ore carriers, lined up out to sea along the channel markers, ponderously move into the harbour again. Getting the port operational is one of town's highest priorities, and the firm is calling in all surveyors from the Karratha office. Several are also flying in from Fremantle and Bunbury tomorrow, but, with Gerald away on top of the backlog from the cyclone, it will be a busy time down there for many weeks to come.

All that will happen, but, right now Phil has an important errand. Rachel and Ian are off on the first civil airline flight leaving Hedland this afternoon. The MMA jet's touchdown was all over the radio, landing in drizzling rain this morning at the recently operational Hedland airport. It was piloted by Captain S. Goddard, the same person who flew the first airliner into Darwin last year after Tracey. He said that, from the air, the damage to Hedland was 'relatively superficial', compared with Darwin. Phil thinks that what happened in Darwin last year was terrible and that Captain Goddard sounds like a brave man. He would also like him to see how things were in this town from the ground, before he opened his mouth for the media to put his words all over the radio and in the newspapers.

Ian had barely arrived back for lunch when a council representative knocked at the door, informing Phil and Momoko that the remaining Cadogan children were to be included in the first passenger flight out of Hedland. It was going to be all over the news; everyone wanted to see the Cadogan family reunited as soon as possible. Ian was happy to be seeing the rest of his family again, especially Jodie, but was not all that keen about the news coverage bit. Phil had advised him to *Just be polite.* Momoko was making up some vegemite sandwiches for lunch as she is learning about Australian food and the bread out of the freezer was starting to go a bit dry and Wanted Using. Ian had told Momoko not to worry about the vegemite going off as it sort of lasts forever. Momoko had frowned at that and sniffed the jar, declaring *Smells gone bad already*. As Phil had kissed his wife and left to pick up Rachel, she was opening up a can of tuna for her and

Alice, draining it and adding soy sauce. Ian had frowned and said *Gross* and ate his vegemite sandwich.

Phil chuckles to himself at the memory. He likes these Cadogan children very much and hopes that Gerald can overcome the demons in his head, as he sees that they could tear the whole family apart. His mind goes back to that terrible morning and he sees Gerald's wild eyes and filthy appearance. Phil had fear in his chest as he looked into those eyes and saw that his neighbour had gone a little bit mad. He had wondered what he would do if he had not been able to calm Gerald down. Now Phil finds himself going to a dark place in his own head, as he realizes with absolute certainty that he would have done whatever he had to, in order to keep his little family safe.

Now that the storm has passed, something Gerald kept saying has stuck in his mind: *Jodie wanted her Sindy doll. That's the only reason this happened. It was in the middle drawer in her bedroom and she went to get it, that's all. She just wanted her Travel Sindy doll.* It seemed most important to Gerald, so it must have been to Jodie, also.

Phil picks his way down the passage carefully, for the floor is still wet and muddy. He reaches Jodie's bedroom door and the wood is swollen, so he has to force it open with his shoulder. In the daylight, the room looks as if a bomb's gone off in there and he shudders a little when he looks around. He wants to close the door and go back out, leave it alone until the insurance assessors have been and the clean-up and repairs can start. But he's got an important matter he has to attend to, so he makes himself step into the room. Broken glass crunches like insect bodies under his steel-capped boots. He looks over at the remnants of the steel cyclone mesh that covered the window, torn away like cobweb and has to smother the thought in his head *what if this had happened to Alice* or he will have to leave now and he won't be able to come back.

He goes over to the chest of drawers, lying on its front where Gerald let it fall. He can't help but picture Jodie under there, for Gerald had spared him no details in the state he was in *her feet were sticking out just her feet and they were wet and white like dead things and I thought she was already gone* and now Phil wonders the same thing. He squats down and braces the weight of the dresser with his back and straightens, hauling it upright. He's not tall but he's strongly built, and yet, he can barely lift it. He grunts with exertion and manages to set the hated thing back on its base. Now there is no doubt in his mind: that little girl should be dead, pinned under

that. He steps back to let the dresser go but it's still not stable. Frowning, he rocks it slightly and feels it lean towards him; something is under it still. He levers the chest clear and rakes bits of glass away with the toe of his boot, until it settles on a flat surface. He peers over the side of it and something gleams down there that is oddly familiar.

Phil wipes his forehead with his arm and blinks, for the unaccustomed humidity is lacing his eyes with sweat. He slides around the chest of drawers and stoops low, retrieving the object which is surprisingly solid and heavy. He looks at it wonderingly, for, although it has been dulled by the mud and its head is pressed in at the front, it is undoubtedly *Maneki Neko*, the lucky cat. He holds it upright and its paw waves weakly at him. It is solid enough, and strong enough, to have taken just enough of the weight for Jodie.

Phil remembers the last time they saw Jodie before the accident. A slow smile transforms his face, softening the new lines there from these past two days. He hears Momoko's musical voice and sees her serene smile. *Shikashi, watashi wa anata ni kare o ataeru.*

But I give him to you.

Phil is still smiling as he carefully places the lucky cat on a clear spot on the floor. It takes him both hands to force open the swollen drawer but he sees what he is after straight away. He gently pulls the doll with the shiny hair and happy smile out of the drawer. Sindy is a little damp and there is a brown mark on her pale pink trousers, but other than that, she looks fine. On a whim, he checks the drawer again and finds a doll-sized case in there and a matching pink hat, both of which he tucks into his shirt pocket.

Now he holds up the two precious objects, one in each hand. He looks from one to the other. He addresses Travel Sindy formally. 'You, my lady, are going on a plane, a *real* plane. You have a little friend that needs you more than you'll ever know.'

Then he turns his attention to *Maneki Neko*, the lucky cat. 'And you have done your work here, done it bravely and well. *You* are going home.'

He laughs then and it is like drinking down a big glass of water so cold that the sides are frosted. He leaves the room quickly, for Sindy has a plane to catch and the shelf on the wall in the front room has been empty for too long.

Chapter Sixteen—Regeneration

Cyclones are a regular feature of life up here and we must have them, or we'd have no rain to replenish the area, so no wildflowers or healthy ecosystems.
By the same token, you obviously don't want direct hits; fortunately, these are an extreme rarity... maybe once every thirty years (George and before that, Joan). Now we have modern building standards, modern communications, tracking with the internet…back when [Joan hit] it would have been scary, with a lot of time when you didn't know what was happening.
Kelly Howlett, Port Hedland Visitor's Centre [now Mayor of Port Hedland] interview 16 July 2009

I do recall Cyclone Joan vividly, because I was a young mum with a five-month-old baby. Living in a house that was shaking and rattling and rolling for twenty- four hours…then we had no power for two weeks and I was having to sterilize bottles on a wood fire barbeque–you know, things like that!
Julie Hunt, interview18 February 2009

10.45am Wednesday December 10, 1975
Port Hedland District Hospital

It's only mid-morning but former backpacker Claire Bennett is annoyed to find that she is yawning again. She's ticking off a hand-written inventory of medical supplies against the stack of tubes and bottles in front of her, sorting them according to demand and noting pressing requirements. She turns up the transistor radio behind her to help keep her awake and it's all about Joan and will be for weeks. A young couple are responding to a talkback segment after a councillor has been on air criticizing so-called Cyclone Parties, a Hedland phenomenon that the council officially and actively discourages on grounds of safety. Matt is saying, *Yeah we had a Cyclone Party, as you do; we had the barbie out the back, had lunch…I think when the winds got to about 180 to 190km/ph we said…Hmmm. I think it was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and we'd just gone on Red Alert. So we said to everyone, I think you'd better go home now, so they all went home. We were all pretty happy by then*. Matt's partner Jackie contributes and she is indignant. *Look, a lot of people criticize Cyclone Parties, but…it was our first big cyclone. We had our next-door-neighbour, who was only there temporarily. He had no food in his cupboards, nothing, and he's never been through a cyclone. So, having him over to our house….at least he wasn't sitting there all alone, wondering what was going on. And, our other neighbours from around the corner; they had been through a cyclone before. I was worried that the house was*

rocking a lot…you could feel the pressure building up. And our neighbour said, Well, open up the back windows…so I did and you could instantly feel that the house was more stabilised. We were on Athol Street, and we had the cyclone front-on, so we were overlooking the flats, on the way to Cooke Point Caravan Park. So the cyclone was hitting our house front-on and, when I opened the back windows, it released the pressure…which could potentially pop the roof off, which is maybe what did happen to our next-door neighbours. So, having that advice and that security was great.[14]

Claire says *Yeah, Lady you tell them!* to no one in particular and thinks that she could murder a beer right there and then, even if it was still morning. The past few days have played havoc with her body clock, overriding its usual immunity. She recalls feeling a rush of great relief as Jodie and her parents were transferred to the airport sometime late-afternoon, then Sister Ruth had found her a trundle bed made up with a crisp white sheet. She fell onto it and it smelt heavenly and she passed out and slept for ten hours straight.

Claire has stayed on at the hospital because, heaven knows, this town needs all the help it can get right now and there isn't anywhere else she'd rather be. Matron Fricker eagerly accepted her offer of help and Claire has produced her passport from her backpack and signed off on interim employment and insurance forms. For now, getting the hospital back up to full operational capacity ranks up there in priority along with the port and the airstrip. Two Bigwigs from the Department of Health in Perth have already toured the place and have said that it might be necessary to do some 'replanning' of planned extensions to the hospital because of the damage. These comments have been met with more than a little scepticism from hospital staff, but so far things are progressing as well as can be expected. Generators, emergency medical supplies plus support staff and an extra doctor have been flown in, and there's power and running water to essential areas. A notable highlight was fluffy white bread with real butter and jam for breakfast, flown in fresh from Darwin this morning.

Claire glances at her watch, confirming that it is time for another round of patient checks. She stacks the supplies neatly in the metal cabinet and locks the door, dropping the keys secured

[14] Excerpt taken from interview with Matt and Jackie Farmer on 21 September, 2009 at their Victoria Park residence. The couple lived in Port Hedland from 2005-2007 and have many significant memories of the town. I have taken a few liberties with this quote, for it actually related to their experience of Cyclone George, which lasted five days in March 2007. The Bureau of Meteorology reported that '*George* was the most destructive cyclone to affect Port Hedland since TC *Joan* in 1975' (Australian Government, Bureau of Meteorology. (n.d.). *Tropical Cyclone George: 3-10 March 2007*). My research throughout this project confirmed many striking similarities between the two cyclones some thirty years apart, including the tradition of Cyclone Parties.

by a button chain into her pocket. The radio broadcasts an update on Jodie Cadogan, reconfirming her status as critical but stable. The girl remains in a medically induced coma but her dosage is being gradually lightened until she is able to breathe on her own. Claire is relieved but concerned. She knows that the little girl has many challenges ahead and hopes to see her again, to meet her properly. She feels as though she knows her well already.

Claire heads down the corridor towards the makeshift ward, which now has almost full lighting and power from donated generators. She suspects that her former travel companion Elaine may not be happy about it, but she's planning to stay a while longer. Matron has already assured her that there is a permanent position here into the foreseeable future if she wants it, and that her British qualifications can be verified once communication channels are re-established. Claire knows that there is good work she can do here, but, more than that, this town is getting under her skin. She smiles at this realization and hears a gravelly voice calling her *mate*.

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2.30pm Princess Margaret Hospital, Subiacco

Gerald feels Emily's hand tighten in his and he applies gentle pressure in response. They are here for a review of Jodie's condition and Dr Waters is straight to the point.

'Jodie's Traumatic Brain Injury, or TBI, is classified in the moderate range….however, I feel you should know that there is a risk of permanent disability, on some level.'

Gerald is impatient for facts with which he can work. 'How high is the risk, then?'

Dr Waters hesitates for only a second or two, but it is significant. 'Recent studies have indicated—and I really must emphasize, this is in *adult* cases—a level at around 66%.'

Gerald stiffens. *Two thirds. God Almighty.* The specialist continues, keen to modify these hard facts. '*However,* similar studies on the incidence in children are, as yet, inconclusive. What we *do* know is that children can tolerate higher intracranial pressures over prolonged periods of time than adults and recover better in the immediate and longer time frames. What I can confirm is that we have no way of conclusively assessing her condition until she is able to breathe on her own and we can safely bring her up to consciousness.'

'What sort of disability are you talking about, Doctor Waters?' Emily finds her voice.

The specialist spreads his hands in response, palms up. 'I would be speculating, Mrs Cadogan, and the outcome may be that I worry you unnecessarily.'

'I also need to know what we might be dealing with here. This is our daughter, Doctor Waters.' Emily is quite firm.

He sighs. 'There are a range of physical, social and cognitive deficits that can be associated with TBI, Mrs Cadogan. There are also an array of treatments and therapy courses available towards rehabilitation. But, until Jodie regains consciousness, we can't begin to make a conclusive diagnosis.' Dr Waters closes Jodie's file and removes his glasses. Emily realizes that he must be as tired as they are.

'Look, the human brain really is the last great medical frontier and there is a lot we don't understand yet. Children are resilient, more so than adults; that much we do know. And Jodie has come this far, beating considerable odds already.'

Gerald nods, rising from his seat. He extends his hand. 'Thank you for all you've done for Jodie…and for us.' They shake hands and Jodie's parents leave the room, each of them deep in their own thoughts. Out in the foyer near the lift doors, Emily tells Gerald she will go and collect Rachel and Ian from the waiting room and take them out for some ice-cream, or maybe to Burger King. Gerald nods and automatically pecks her on the cheek. He takes the lift up to ICU and is permitted entry through the double swinging doors. The ten-bed ward is only half-full at the moment and he knows exactly where to go. He reaches his daughter's bedside and stands looking down at her. The bed seems too big for her, the sheets too white, making her skin appear almost transparent. Her strawberry blonde hair is gone for now, replaced by a bandage crash helmet. Her face is partially obscured by a clear respiratory mask and he can hear the rhythmic in-and-out of her breathing. Jodie's eyelids are all but invisible below fair lashes set in eye sockets still shaded in grey. He watches her intently, only recently noticing that her delicate features have been carved by a master hand. He gently pushes away an imaginary strand of hair from her cheek. *She is going to be so beautiful.*

Jodie's bed is surrounded by a bewildering array of monitors and mobile equipment. A round angled floodlight is suspended from the ceiling and positioned directly above. Industrial lino in practical shades of grey extends two-thirds up the walls, barely offset by the brightly coloured curtains patterned with stars and rainbows. A massive pink teddy wearing a shiny purple bow sits on the shelf above the bed, a gift from the council *With love from the people of*

Port Hedland. In teddy's lap sits a smiling doll with brown hair and a pink two-piece suit with matching hat. Among the flowers and get-well cards already gathering on both sides of the bear is a hand-made card decorated with Birdy Bush[15] flowers, dried and painted into colourful and unmistakable birds by Grandad Martin.[16] The old man makes the cards as a hobby and gave it to Ian to deliver, saying he was glad to find one that didn't get wet. His careful cursive writing inside reads *To Jodie, we'll have lots to talk about when you get better. A little piece of Hedland to keep with you until you come home again. Lots of love, Grandad Martin and Elanna xxx.*

A paediatric ICU nurse is checking Jodie's drip, repositioning the clear bag and regulating the flow of liquid. She moves to the end of the bed, extracts the chart from its slot and makes an entry. She looks over at the girl's father, takes in his bruised eye and grazed arms. She feels sorry for him, for he has been through so much and seems like such a gentle man.

'We are successfully reducing her sedation dose, Mr Cadogan. She's starting to breathe on her own, now.' She is firm and reassuring and reminds him of the young English nurse Claire back at the Hedland hospital.

He nods, never taking his eyes off his daughter's face. For now, there's still time. He hopes that, when she wakes up, she will have returned to them. For his part, the angry black clouds are gone for now; she was able to do that much for him. He calls her name, softly.

***

[15] The Birdy Bush, *Crotalaria cunninghamii,* is also known as Green Birdflower or Regal Birdflower. It is a perennial shrub growing up to 3m in height with hairy or woolly branches. The plant's flowers grow on long spikes at the end of its branches and resemble a bird in flight attached by its beak to the central stalk (Australian Native Plants Society, (n.d.). *Crotalaria cunninghamii* common name: Green bird flower). The Birdy Bush is the floral emblem of the town of Port Hedland.

[16] Painted Birdy Bush cards are made by Merv Stanton, a Port Hedland resident since 1942 who was repeatedly described to me as a 'local treasure'. Merv kindly gave up his time to be interviewed as part of this project and his fascinating recollections of Port Hedland span seventy years. He also showed me 'Merv's Lookout', located directly opposite his home on Athol Street and overlooking the former rifle range established in 1942, in response to the threat of Japanese invasion along the north west coast. The town was taken over by the 29th Garrison Battalion, North West Attachment and substantial defence measures implemented. Today, the remains of the 500 yard firing line are visible from Merv's Lookout. Merv arrived in Port Hedland at the age of 16 with the Guerrilla Warfare section of the army and planted gum trees at the lookout in memory of the battalion (Government of Western Australia, State Heritage Office. Shire of Port Hedland, Place # 18427: *World War Two Rifle Range and Merv's Lookout*). Merv's Lookout is a feature of *The Port Hedland Cultural and Heritage Trail*, an initiative of The Port Hedland Historical Society.

The girl opens her eyes to bright light. She sits up, squinting for a few moments as her eyes adjust. Already, the sun seems less intense and she scrambles to her feet to get her bearings. She's still at the beach, still at her *beach, but how different it is. The sky is blue, but paler than usual—the colour of Mum's eyes. The tide is right in, much higher than it should be, and the waves curl delicately onto golden sand. It looks like a beautiful place for a swim.*

She turns full circle, just as she did when she first arrived here, and it is *the same place, but cleaned up, tamed. The seaweed is all gone, the sand dunes neat and ordered. The shark, the black rocks, the boiling sea, the dome sky—all gone. She's still alone, but not lost anymore, although she is a long way up the coast; almost at Pretty Pool. Cemetery Beach, her beach, lies a five kilometre walk to the west, straight up the beach. She probably should get going, but right now there seems to be no reason to hurry.*

She takes a step, and her foot squeaks. Takes another, driving her heel into the sand. Skuh-weeeek! *She giggles, hops a few steps making squeaking noises, then leaps high in the air, practising her hop-skip-jump used in the school sports carnival. She lands squeakily, evenly, weight forward so she can't accidently put her hands back and cop a distance penalty. She runs the silky sand through her fingers, wondering at its powdery fineness. She hasn't seen a beach like this since the last time Mum took Us Kids to City Beach during their holidays in Perth. In Perth, there are no reefs or sharks or sea snakes, and they have lifeguards and red and yellow flags you can swim in between. The best thing about the beaches in Perth, apart from the clean white sand and water you can swim in and be safe, are the sunsets. In Perth, the beaches face directly west and the sun sets over the ocean, which the girl found magical. In Hedland, the sunsets are almost due north, sinking behind Spoil bank from her beach and casting less reflection over the water.*

Now she flops down onto the soft sand and, because she thinks it, the sun begins to set directly over the water. The dome roof is gone and the colours released, painting the Big Sky in breathtaking fiery patterns that stretch overhead all the way down to the horizon. She breathes in the warm air deeply and strongly, until the waves slow to match her breathing. She lets the sun sink quickly down, until it reaches that perfect moment when it just touches the horizon. The colours reflect in the water below, pointing out a pathway to the other side of the world.

The girl only has to concentrate a little in order to suspend the sun, hovering: a flat orange disc in a dusky pink sky that you can look at without ever getting sunburnt or having flashing little sun-shaped lights floating in your vision every time you blink. She draws in all the calm and peace of the place and it sinks in to her core.

The Lady in the Sky is gone, melted away inland almost as far as Wittenoom and washed away in the floods. The girl can peek at the memory now and it has lost most of its sharpness, like the photographs taken with Mum's instant Polaroid camera that fade over time. The Lady's anger was deadly and her heart was black but she has blown herself out now. It is safe here. She could stay forever if she chose, but she knows that she could never go home if she did.

The thought hovers for just a few seconds before she lets it go. It is fun to daydream but the landlocked sunsets and sunburn and poisonous creatures are also part of the same picture that has the huge ships, lit up like floating cities, and a reef in three bands to walk on. That was fair, more than fair. Besides, she is already missing her family and friends. Even her Dad. Especially her Dad.

She notices the line of tankers out on the horizon then, each one appearing larger than the one behind. Lined up, heading into port, after facing the storm at sea. They will soon reach the channel and, from her beach on the far side of Spoil Bank, will resemble great icebreakers cleaving the land. She blows out a big sigh of relief, knowing they made it, after all.

The girl hears her Dad calling and gets to her feet, starts walking home. The sun dips below the horizon, leaving a comforting dusky glow.

Epilogue

6th November, 1978
73 Crawford Street, Port Hedland

The Cadogan family is pretty much ready to go but Jodie knows they should have left hours ago. They won't make Carnarvon now until after dark and the roos on the road at dusk are bad news. It's starting to get awkward as well, because the send-off party has been hanging around for ages but they haven't actually gone anywhere yet. Jodie doesn't want to leave but is ready to head off. Her Dad is in a bad mood and is trying not to show it but occasionally his face contorts a little and his hands go up to the back of his head as though he has no control over them. He takes a bit of a breath then continues with his last-minute checks, fiddling with the ropes securing the tarp covering the boat. Dad bought *Cobia* almost two years ago to take the kids sailing in the family regattas held at the yacht club on Sunday mornings. Rachel refused to go, so Jodie and Ian alternated as crew for their father. Jodie liked it fine once they got going but they were usually late starting off and never had any hope of placing. Now the little Mirror Dingy is no more than an oversized trailer stuffed full of battered suitcases, Pablo's basket and an assortment of household effects. The boot of their little four-cylinder Torana is also absolutely packed. Ian reckons *God help us if we blow a tyre on the road and have to get the spare out*. With the Torana towing the boat, two adults in front and three kids plus the dog in the back, it is a bit of a sight to behold and Jodie wonders what Mr Kokkonis would think of it all.

Dad nods at Mum, who tilts the front seat forward for the kids to get in the back. It looks pretty squishy in there for the three of them and Rachel sighs theatrically as she climbs inside, followed by Ian. Jodie is about to follow but has one last look at the farewell party, which has shrunk considerably during the past half hour. Cameron and Ben Yates, the American kids, have hung around, together with Mr and Mrs Bassett from next door on the other side. The Lewis family from next door has come out yet again—they moved into 73B when the Kokkonis family moved to Karratha last year, after Phil had accepted a promotion with the firm. The two families still meet up at least once a month, alternating between the two towns, but now it's going to have to be less often, until Phil has had enough and they move back down to Perth. Alice is excited about starting school next year and Jodie reckons she'll be the only little girl in the class who

speaks three languages. It's taken longer than they'd hoped, but Momoko is expecting a little brother or sister for Alice early in the New Year. Jodie wishes she could be around to help out.

Grandad Martin and Mrs Witte are still waiting to wave them off. He raises his arm in farewell and Elanna blows a kiss and waves at her. Jodie clutches the photo album he gave her, which is decorated with painted Birdy Bush flowers and covered in clear contact so it lasts. Grandad Martin has told his Port Hedland story in photographs,[17] starting with one of the steamship *Koombana,* through to a group of mates drinking beer at Pretty Pool in the 1940's *big bottles in those days,* loading manganese in the 1950's in the big kibble *over she goes* and a picture of him standing in his daughter's front room after Cyclone Joan with the windows gone and the sand piled up against the furniture *Grouchy Joan came through here without so much as an invitation*. The last photograph is of Jodie and Ian standing on either side of him in his daughter's new living room with big smiles *Almost as good as new*.

Jodie looks down at her toes, all red and dusty, and feels her eyes getting hot and blurry. She waves quickly and ducks into the back seat next to Ian. There's not much room and they have to touch knees. Mum says, *You ready?* and all of the kids raise their hands out of the way as she dumps the dog in and snatches back her gloved hands. The indignant Chihuahua jumps down, snarling, to wind up on Ian's feet. Jodie's brother sighs loudly and wants to know how long before they reach Carnarvon. They could have flown to Perth, but things have not been great at Toulsens & Associates since Old Man Toulsen died last year. His son Gary has taken over the company but he has an eye for the ladies and has made some big cutbacks to the surveyor's entitlements. On top of that, world markets for iron ore have not been good since the start of the year and overseas steel mills are losing money. When Gerald had to pay the $500 insurance excess after hitting a sheep on the way to Port Walcott, it was time to go.

Jodie wishes they were local kids and not blow-ins, which they still are after five years. Mum said that the move to Perth would be handy for Jodie's specialist appointments, but her visits to Princess Margaret Hospital are only six-monthly these days. Sometimes, Jodie gets a bit lost halfway through a sentence because she can't remember the word she is looking for, although she sees it, letter-for-letter, in her head. She swims at the pool at least three times a

[17] Merv Stanton has always been an avid photographer and his extensive collection documents the story of the town over seven decades. Merv kindly contributed many photographs from his personal collection to assist with this project. Needless to say, Merv provided much of the inspiration for the character of Grandad Martin—but certainly not all of it, for he didn't seem to have a grouchy bone in his body.

week with the Swimming Club squad and sees a physio every week because sometimes her left foot slows her down or looks odd when she is standing. Now Jodie thinks that the only good thing about moving to Perth will be seeing her best friend Jackie again. The Cross family left back in April, because there's no houses being built in this town right now. The girls write to each other almost every week. Jackie's Dad Ernie is making a real effort to try and settle down for good and he has the entire family on board helping build a house in Parkwood they can call home.

Mum and Dad get in and belt up and Dad starts the motor. He turns in his seat to see out of the back window so he can back the boat down the driveway. With some effort, he smiles at the kids. *It'll be a proper Road Trip,* he says.

Grandad Martin and Elanna watch the entourage nudge down the driveway. A little four-cylinder, two-door car with no air-conditioning and two adults and three kids plus the dog, towing a fully loaded boat all the way to Perth. The old man heaves a shuddery sigh and his daughter makes the sign of the cross.

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2006.51 Cyclone Joan Dec 1975 Service Station Anderson Street

2006.55 Cyclone Joan 1975 (b & w photograph, untitled)

2006.55 Cyclone Joan Dec 1975: Port Hedland District Hospital Casualty Section

2006.59 Cyclone Joan 1975 (4X b & w photographs, untitled: residences, aftermath)

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Appendix I

List of Participants

Oral Interviews

Tina Chinery and Andrew Waters at WA Country Health Services, Pilbara Regional Office, Port Hedland, on 17 July 2009.

Glennis Dewsnap at Rowethorpe Nursing Home, Bentley, on 5 February 2010.

Henry Dewsnap at his Cloverdale residence on 10 February 2010.

Serge Doumergue at Hedland First National Real Estate, Port Hedland, on 14 July 2010.

Matt and Jackie Farmer at their Victoria Park residence on 21 September 2009.

Kelly Howlett at the Port Hedland Visitors Centre on 16th July 2009.

Julie Hunt at her Sutherland Street, Port Hedland residence on 18 July 2009.

Stan Martin and Arnold Carter at the Port Hedland Civic Centre on 1 July 2009.

Tina Moone at her Mount Lawley residence on 7 October 2011.

Merv Stanton at his Athol Street, Port Hedland residence on 22 July 2009.

Raelene Joy Talbot at Dalgetty House, Port Hedland, on 21 July 2009.

John and June Van Uden at their Sutherland Street, Port Hedland residence on 19 July 2009.

Stephen Webster at the Pilbara Development Commission, Port Hedland, on 15 July 2009.

Written interview

Gail Kirby (2010, January 9) personal communication [typed transcript], pp. 1-3.

Appendix II

Interview Questions, Information Letter and Consent Form

Karen Fouweather Project 3741
The Red Pipe: Creative Writing Component.
Research conducted by Karen Fouweather towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Edith Cowan University, Mount Lawley, Western Australia.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Port Hedland

- How long have you lived in Port Hedland?
- What is your most vivid memory of the town?
- What do you think is the most significant aspect about the town?
- What is the most significant event that you have been involved in that has happened in the town?
- How important do you think that Port Hedland is to the history of Western Australia?
- What is your favourite activity to do in the town?
- Where is your favourite place in the town or its surroundings?
- Did you go to school in the town and if so, where?
- Do you think that the town is a good place for children to grow up in?
- Do you think that the town has any significant social aspects, whether positive or negative?
- Do you prefer the town to living anywhere else (for example, in Perth)?
- How do you see the future of the town?
- Do you think of Port Hedland as home?

MOUNT LAWLEY CAMPUS

2 Bradford Street
Mount Lawley
Western Australia 6050
Telephone 134328
Facsimile 9370 2910

ABN 54 361 485 361

Appendix II

Information Letter

[Date]

[Name and address]

Dear [name],

INFORMATION LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

CREATIVE AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project, which is being conducted as part of the requirements of the following post graduate research project:

Principal Researcher: Karen Fouweather
Course: 115 Doctor of Philosophy, Research Project 3741
School of Communications and Arts, Faculty of Education and Arts
Supervisor: Associate Professor Dr Jill Dury
Ph 9370 6308 E-mail: j.durey@ecu.edu.au

The purpose of the project is to produce the following:

1. Autobiographical/fictional novel entitled *The Red Pipe,* set in Port Hedland during the 1970's (approx 60,000 words)
2. Critical essay examining the impact of migration upon the British children (aged 2-18 years old) who travelled to Australia under the height of the assisted passage scheme during the 1960's (approx 40,000 words)

In view of your [details], your contributions would be extremely helpful to item 1 of the project.

If you choose to participate in this project, you will be asked to participate in an interview. I have attached some sample questions for your information.

The information obtained from this interview will be used to complete the requirements for the thesis noted above, and only the principal researcher and the supervisor will have access to the information. The interview will last for a maximum of one hour. Any information or details given for this study will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this project. In addition, any recording of the interview will be erased at the completion of the project, which will be by 30 September 2012.

Alternatively, and with your permission, a copy of the recording and/or transcript will be offered as a permanent addition to the Oral History Collection held at the Battye Library, State Library of Western

Appendix II

Information Letter, cont'd

Australia. If you wish your name not to be mentioned in the project, please let me know at the time of the interview and indicate this on the consent form.

There should be no risk or discomfort to you, and participation in this project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any time without explanation or penalty. You are also free to ask for any information which identifies you to be withdrawn from the study.

I also require you to sign a consent form (attached) before the interview.

If you would like any further information about the project, please contact me as follows**:**

Principal Researcher
Karen Fouweather
Contact details: Ph (08) 9496 1493 m 04179 36509
e-mail: k.fouweather@ecu.edu.au
Mailing address: 177 Peet Road, Roleystone WA 6111

Should you decide at any time to withdraw your participation from this exercise, please contact either myself or my supervisor, Dr Jill Durey.

Thanking you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Fouweather

2 Bradford Street
Mount Lawley
Western Australia 6050
Telephone 134328
Facsimile 9370 2910

ABN 54 361 485 361

Appendix II

CONSENT FORM

CREATIVE AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT 3741

Principal Researcher: Karen Fouweather

I have been provided with a copy of the Information Letter, explaining the project.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that participation in the research project will involve an interview, and that only the principal researcher and supervisor will have access to the information obtained from this interview. That information will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the project. I also understand that the interview will last for a maximum of one hour. In addition, any recording of this interview will be deleted at the completion of this project, which will be by 30 September 2012. Alternatively, and with my permission, a copy of the recording and/or transcript will be offered as a permanent addition to the Oral History Collection held at the Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia. I am also able to state whether or not I wish my name to be mentioned in the research project.

I understand that if I sign this consent form, I am still free to withdraw from further participation at any time without explanation or penalty. Although I hereby give my consent for the following principal researcher to quote or paraphrase my answers in the research project, I am also free, if I change my mind, to ask for any information which identifies me to be withdrawn from the study.

I freely agree to participate in the project

……
Signature
……
Date

I am **willing/unwilling** for my name to be included in the research project.

……
Signature
……
Date